DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 168 166 EA 011 444

TITLE	Alternative Schools. Research Report 1976-3.
INSTITUTION	National School Boards Association, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	76
NOTE	62p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National School Boards Association, 1055 Thomas Jefferson Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007 ($3.50; quantity discounts; shipping and handling charges will be added to billed orders)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Alternative Schools; *Educational Alternatives; Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; Inservice Teacher Education; *Program Administration; Program Costs; Program Evaluation; Teacher Selection

ABSTRACT

During the 1970's, school districts throughout the country have created alternative educational programs allowing students and parents to choose the appropriate educational structure and methodology that suit their individual needs. School boards who establish alternative schools must assess, plan, design, effect, and evaluate educational programs to meet the particular needs of local students. The purpose of this report is to assist school boards in these undertakings. Authors asked people recognized as knowledgeable and experienced in the field of nontraditional education programs to provide responses to the most persistent questions of school leaders about alternatives. The interview format allows the expression of a diversity of experiences, beliefs, and attitudes, rather than offering only one correct answer. Questions and answers center around setting goals for alternative schools, dealing with problems, initiating creative planning processes, estimating expenses, matching students with the options, evaluating alternatives, selecting and training staff, ensuring the survival of alternatives, and getting started. (Author/JM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

National School Boards Association
NSBA RESEARCH REPORT

- ED168166

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

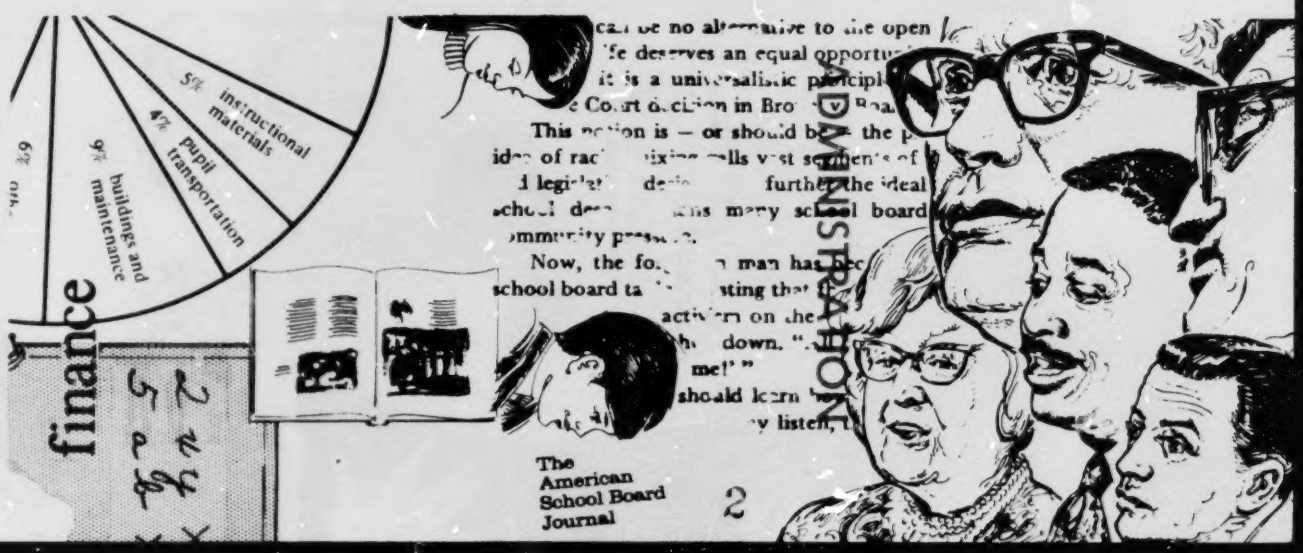
Report number 1976-3

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

NSBA

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

Alternative schools



EA 011 444

National School Boards Association

George W. Smith, President
Harold V. Webb, Executive Director

Jeremiah Floyd, Director, Institute Division
James A. Mecklenburger, Director of Research
Bonnie L. Stenson, Research Assistant

Don E. Blom, Assistant Executive Director
for Administration and Membership Services
Lee VanBremen, Membership Services Director

Research Report 1976-3
Alternative schools

Price of report: single copy $3.50. Discounts on quantity orders: 10-49 copies, 10%; 50-99 copies, 15%; 100 or more copies, 20%. Shipping and handling charges will be added to billed orders.

Reproduction: No part of this research report may be reproduced in any form without prior written permission from the NSBA Research Department. Address communications to the Director of Research, National School Boards Association, 800 State National Bank Plaza, P.O. Box 1496, Evanston, Illinois 60204.

Information reported in NSBA research reports does not necessarily reflect official viewpoints of the Association.

Copyright © 1976 by National School Boards Association.
All Rights Reserved.

National School Boards Association
RESEARCH REPORT

Contents

Foreword iii
Introduction 1
What good do alternatives do? 7
What problems do alternatives create? 11
How can creative planning processes be initiated? 15
How much do alternative schools cost? 19
How are students matched with the options? 23
How are alternatives evaluated? 27
How are staff selected and trained? 33
Are there alternatives to failure? 37
What do the experts say about getting started? 41
Resources 45
Appendix A 49
Appendix B 55
Appendix C 58

Foreword

During the 1970s, school districts throughout the country have created alternative educational programs whereby students and/or parents can choose an appropriate educational structure and methodology to suit individual needs. Some of these programs have taken advantage of current ideas about educational innovation. Others have reinstituted styles of education from an earlier time. The rationale that justifies the creation of such programs is that students have different styles of learning and public school systems should offer each student the environment which best facilitates skill and talent development. The National School Boards Association encourages boards to seriously consider the concept of alternative public educational programs. The concept at its best seems to exemplify NSBA's belief in fulfilling students' needs through innovation, curriculum flexibility, bilingual education, comprehensive career education and programs for gifted students. The purpose of this report is to assist school boards in that consideration.

Options within public school systems exemplify lay local control at its best. They make clear that local boards seek to provide what is best for the members of each community. Boards who establish alternative schools must assess, plan, design, effect and evaluate educational programs to meet the individual needs of local students. In keeping with our belief in lay local control of America's school systems, we caution school boards against wholesale adoption of another school district's educational programs. To do so is not consistent with the philosophy or spirit of the alternative concept.

Harold V. Webb, Executive Director
National School Boards Association

Introduction

Early in American history, schooling was optional, and there were several options. A child or his parents could choose among the child's learning at home with or without a tutor, attending one of many types of private schools, entering an apprenticeship arranged by the parents, or laboring full time at work which did not require apprenticeship. Only in the late 19th century did universal compulsory schooling become commonplace.

For most families, compulsory schooling reduced the traditional range of alternatives available to young people. Private or parochial schools were a legal option to public schooling; but most parents, then or now, could not afford these. For some older youngsters, vocational schools took the place of apprenticeship. But, in this century, attendance in public schools by most children has become an American phenomenon.

For many reasons, including compulsory attendance, American schools nationwide have become rather similar to one another; similarity, not diversity, characterizes the American pattern of educating children. American educators have, in this century, striven to find *the* best way to educate youngsters. Uniformity of schooling received a boost in mid-century when movements toward comprehensiveness, consolidation and centralization fulfilled the belief that bigger schools and bigger school districts would be better. More recently, uniformity has been fostered by the interpretation of equal opportunity as meaning consistency in program offerings.

About 1970, equal opportunity took on a new interpretation for some educators. Instead of striving for uniformity, they began to resurrect a version of the historic American pattern—that students or their parents have a choice among educational programs, although this time within the public school structure. Instituted in a few communities, this revival of historic pattern has spread to thousands of school districts, of every size, in all sections of the country.

In trying to label this new trend, labels such as public schools of choice, options in public education, and multiple-option systems have been applied. The most prevalent label (although perhaps not the most useful) is alternative schools.

Why the emergence of alternative schools?

Not one reason, but several. Educators (and probably everyone else) are painfully aware that not every child is successful in conventional schools. The evidence of embarrassingly high drop-out rates, drug addiction, alcohol usage, crime, absenteeism, violence and vandalism, as well as declining standardized achievement test scores, high adolescent suicide rates, apathy, declining public support for education and similar travails has broken through the complacency and defensiveness that frequently characterize educators' posture. Students, teachers, parents, administrators, board members and much of the public have become more sympathetic to less conventional schooling for some students.

Within professional circles, increasing legitimacy is granted the observation known by most parents and teachers that youngsters learn in a variety of patterns and that teachers teach in a variety of styles; when student pattern and teaching style mesh, good education is more likely. Although a decade of innovation has failed to find *the* best way to educate all youngsters, a smorgasbord of *ways* has been exhibited; school leaders are beginning to recognize the value in options both for students and for teachers.

Consumerism, crises in government and other social phenomena have made schools—and their failings—more visible and controversial. The rhetoric of the people taking hold of their institutions and molding the institutions to peoples' needs has not been lost on schools. But the lack of consensus about *the* way to alter schools has made it seem wise to many board members and community leaders that public education offer its publics diverse kinds of schools.

Other factors have probably hastened the growth of alternative schools. Recognition by significant institutions is one. In 1971, the U.S. Office of Education, through its Experimental Schools program, awarded federal grants to three school systems (Berkeley, California; Franklin Pierce, Washington; Minneapolis, Minnesota) to develop numerous options within their public school programs. In 1974, the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, the accrediting organization, adopted written policies for approving optional schools.

Perhaps most influential is the word-of-mouth success stories. As more alternative projects across the country sustain successful operation, and as these programs receive publicity within the education community and through the mass media, other school systems are inspired to consider alternatives.

What kinds of choices do "alternative schools" offer?

As with any emerging idea, there is a struggle with terminology. In studying alternative schools NSBA adopted the definition advanced by the International Consortium for Options in Public Education: Alternative schools are educational programs in public school districts which offer a *choice* of more than one educational option to students (or their parents). The labels applied to these different options are numerous and often creative and unfamiliar. Below is a list of such labels, but it is far from complete and at best suggestive of kinds of programs that many districts are developing and offering as options.

The emphasis in this report is not on the kinds of options, but on the emerging phenomenon of public school systems establishing options, allowing students and parents to choose. Whether a school district should make options available to its students is a policy question—a school board issue, ultimately, and sometimes a controversial one. This report is designed to inform that policy question.

It should be noted that schools for special purposes, to which students are assigned, i.e., schools for discipline problems, for pregnant students, for returned drop-outs, are *not* alternative schools since, from the student or parent perspective, there is no option. (There is sometimes confusion on this point because some school districts have tried to upgrade the image of such programs by labeling them alternative and because some school districts have decided that the way to try alternative schools in their districts is to design them for different kids; this latter strategy is not advised by the battle-scarred developers of alternative schools.)

Descriptions and examples of the most common types of alternatives are listed here:

Continuous Progress: Operating with the philosophy that each child learns most quickly and successfully when allowed to progress at his or her own pace, this kind of school is ungraded and requires students to progress through a sequential curriculum in basic skills. In addition, continuous progress schools usually permit students to choose areas of interest for exploration so individuals put their

developing skills to use. The Pratt Elementary School, part of the Southeast Alternatives in Minneapolis, is a continuous progress school which has operated since 1971.

Fundamental: Grades, highly-structured teacher-oriented instruction, basic skills development and homework are characteristics of fundamental schools. These usually are accompanied by dress codes and lessons in character development. The John Marshall Fundamental School, in Pasadena, California, opened in 1973, and is one of four such schools in the district.

Bilingual: While these alternatives address the "required" subjects, they do so with an emphasis on using a language and understanding a culture other than American English. While such schools may evolve into a haven for minority students conversant in the non-English language, the best attract a cross section of students, most of whom have no working knowledge of the language or culture when they enter the alternative school. The Cincinnati public school system has six bilingual schools, two each of German, French and Spanish.

Open: Open schools give students the freedom and responsibility to decide the directions of their own educations. Students help plan their own activities, fulfilling the goals of open schools—to build self confidence, respect for one another's differences and a positive self image in a non-competitive atmosphere. The Marcy Elementary School in southeast Minneapolis is an open school.

Environmental: The John Ball Zoo School in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is a three-year-old example of an environmental alternative. It attracts sixth-grade students from all over the city and its curriculum emphasizes two objectives: providing students with basic skills and an educational experience in environmental studies. Not all environmental schools use a zoo as a base of operations. Wildlife preserves, bogs, seashores and other natural areas can provide equally enriching educational environments.

Performing arts: Although the curriculum in these schools may include traditional subject areas, the emphasis is placed on developing the skills and talents of the student body in the fields of drama, speech, dance or other "non-academic" areas. The High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Houston is such an alternative school, drawing its student body from the entire city.

Montessori: Schools operated on the principles of Maria Montessori, long available in the private sector, are now being developed as options within some public school systems. The Cincinnati system has a Montessori school and plans to begin another next school year.

Free: The Free School, part of the Southeast Alternatives in Minneapolis, has been operating since 1971 with the philosophy that the school can build "confidence and awareness within students so that they will want to learn the skills necessary to survive in today's world." Students largely pursue individual interests and many of the learning activities take place away from the school building. A board of parents, students and staff make governance decisions.

School without walls: Probably the best known of this type of school is Parkway in Philadelphia. Parkway uses the city as its school. Begun in 1968, Parkway has no buildings or classrooms, its "courses" are offered throughout the city, students help select and evaluate teachers and curriculum. Business and industrial leaders in Philadelphia contribute facilities and instructors and the program opeates at less than average per-student cost for Philadelphia schools. Metro High in Chicago, operating since 1970, is another well-known example of the school without walls.

Mini-school: These schools offer several schools-within-a-school, each usually having its own staff and unique curriculum. Haaren High School in New York, which opened in 1971, began with 14 different mini-schools, each with its own program, everything from aviation to urban affairs. Quincy High

School in Illinois, has seven mini-schools housed in its building: traditional, flexible, individualized, fine arts, career, work-study, special education. Each student chooses a program.

Vocational: These schools within public systems are options usually available to high school students. Houston offers programs for those interested in aerodynamics, engineering, business administration, petrochemical careers and health professions. They also offer an elementary program for students interested in science careers.

These are some of the alternative schools operating right now, all over the country. They are not the only types of public school options. The possibilities are infinite, since each community designs alternatives which are unique.

Why do they work? Why do they fail?

Of course, if there were a definitive answer, the story of alternatives would be all success. But alternative schools, like any other project, are subject to failure. The number that have closed or never did quite get off the ground is unknown. But in looking at the alternative schools which have sustained operation for a number of years and by talking with people involved with those schools, one can sketch a "success formula" of sorts, and learn about some failure warning signs.

In the next section of this report, several people who have broad experience with alternative schools address the question of what makes an alternative a success. In discussions about why an alternative works, a few key concepts stand out. Planning, community input and flexibility seem to be universal requirements if a school or program is to thrive. Each program should have a purpose, goals and objectives, hammered out by those who have to live with them. Some educators point out that schools which have been designed by administrators alone or teachers alone have, in fact, proven to be true success stories. While this is true, most alternative public schools are formed taking into consideration the ideas and desires of many community members, including parents, students and teachers. And the schools do not spring up overnight. Anyone involved with the formation of a successful alternative program will emphasize the importance of planning, when asked how to succeed. Months of hearings, planning sessions, work groups, surveying, revising, collecting and general hard work are typical forerunners of alternative school openings. The planning never stops. It becomes wrapped up with evaluation. An alternative must remain flexible.

Rigidity is a warning sign. If the institution loses its flexibility, it almost certianly will cease to respond to the changing needs of its clients. If parents, students and teachers do not continue to have input into their school, the school begins to fail to meet their needs.

Money is also a common trouble spot for alternative schools. Although many people experienced with optional programs say most cost no more than conventional programs, they do admit that costs are often kept down by using volunteer help in the form of time, goods and human effort. If these resources begin to dry up, many alternative schools simply cannot afford to keep their doors open.

Teacher energy must continue to flow if an alternative is to maintain itself. Discussions of alternative schools often address the phenomenon of "teacher burnout rate." Success for many alternative programs depends in large part on staff expending more energy than they would in a conventional program. The hours devoted to planning, inservice activities and individual attention often far exceed those required in a normal work week, and many teachers overextend themselves in new programs when they have so much opportunity to help create the learning environment. Although no one has found the solution to this problem, it is helpful to be aware that it occurs, to discuss it during inservice activities and to search for ways to alleviate the burnout problem at the school building level.

What is the status of the alternative school?

In November of 1975, the National School Boards Association surveyed a representative sample of school board members from across the country. We defined alternative school as it is defined in this report: the availability of options to students (or their parents). Of the respondents, 6% indicated that they have alternative schools only at the elementary level in their school districts. Alternatives at the secondary level only are available in the districts of 13% of the respondents. Alternatives at both elementary and secondary levels are currently offered in the districts of 6% of the respondents. No alternative schools operate in the districts of 72% of the sample. Thus one quarter of the school board members have alternative schools functioning in their school districts currently. However, only 14% have formally approved policy statements that establish the right of students or parents to choose programs. School districts which embark on a program to offer each student a choice among alternative educational programs should say so, in a written policy. This statement's adoption should precede the creation of the specific alternatives, so everyone involved in program development knows from the start the philosophy and goals to which the school board has committed the school district. (See Appendices for examples.)

Although a quarter of the school districts in the country may have alternative programs available, we do not know exactly how many new schools have been created or are functioning. Since 1973, the International Consortium on Options in Public Education in Bloomington, Indiana, has been working to record the growth in numbers of alternative schools. That fall, ICOPE identified 464 alternative public schools. ICOPE estimates that today there are more than 5,000 alternative schools operating. While ICOPE's efforts to record the status of these institutions are not the most scientific, many of the facts it has learned are interesting and useful. Seventy percent of the alternative public schools in ICOPE's latest count are in nine states: California, New York, Washington, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey and Illinois. On a regional basis,* NSBA found that there are alternatives schools in 25% of Eastern school board members' districts, 25% of Midwestern members' districts, 26% of Southern members' districts and 24% of Western members' districts. Although the prevalence of alternative programs appears not to differ by region of the country, apparently elementary alternatives are most frequent in the West and secondary alternatives are least frequent in the West. The prevalence of alternative programs does differ by size of enrollment in the school district. Alternative schools are found in every size district; of NSBA's respondents from districts with 1-599 students, 18% indicated they have alternatives, 39% from districts with 5,000-9,999 students claimed alternatives, while 66% of the respondents from districts with more than 25,000 students said they have alternative schools operating within their districts. The alternative school concept is definitely not on the fringe of American public school activity; it is an important part of the program in many school districts and its significance is growing.

School leaders want to know

NSBA set out to learn the state-of-the-alternative school phenomenon. We read literature, visited alternative schools, spoke with board members, superintendents, principals, teachers, students, parents, researchers and others who have been involved with alternative schools across the country. During our study we also encountered many other people who are concerned about their schools and wish to learn about alternatives. It was from listening to and talking with these people that we learned what it is school leaders want to know about alternative schools. In noting their questions and searching for the answers, we realized that many of the questions have more than one answer, often many "correct"

*EAST: Maine, N.H., R.I., Conn., Vt., Mass., N.Y., N.J., Pa., W.Va., Del., Md., D.C. MIDWEST: Ohio, Ind., Ill., Mich., Minn., Wisc., Iowa, N.D., S.D., Kansas, Neb., Mo. SOUTH: Ky., Tenn., Va., N.C., S.C., Ga., Fla., Ala., Miss., Texas., Ark., Okla., La. WEST: Ariz., N.M., Colo., Nev., Mont., Idaho, Wyo., Utah, Cal., Wash., Ore., Alaska, Hawaii.

answers. Fulfilling these people's desires has been our concern and ultimately became our perspective for this report.

Thus we arrived at the format for this report to school boards. By asking people recognized as being knowledgeable and experienced in the field of non-traditional educational programs to provide responses to the most persistent questions, we felt certain that differences of opinion would emerge and a clear picture of the diversity of answers would result. This method precludes bias on NSBA's or the writer's part and provides the reader with a smorgasbord of experts' experiences, beliefs and attitudes.

NSBA asked about the experiences and ideas of several people well known in the world of alternative schools. We interviewed them at length, soliciting their answers to the questions board members ask about alternative schools most frequently. Our panel includes the following people:

Dr. Mario Fantini is dean of the Faculty of Education at State University College at New Paltz, New York. He is well known nationally as the author of *Public Schools of Choice* and as an untiring advocate of optional programs in public schools.

Dr. Don E. Glines is currently program director of the Office of Curriculum Services in the California State Department of Education. He formerly headed the Wilson School, an alternative in the Mankato, Minnesota, system.

Dr. Gene Mulcahy is special assistant to the superintendent for developing program in the Hartford, Connecticut, public school system. He formerly headed the Shanti school, an alternative serving several school districts in the Hartford area.

Dr. Vernon E. Smith is professor of education at Indiana University, as well as director of the Center for Options in Public Education, also in Bloomington, Indiana.

Dr. Don Waldrip is now a consultant in alternative schools. He recently left his position as superintendent of schools for Cincinnati, Ohio.

Dr. Betty Jo Zander is principal of the Pratt Elementary continuous progress school in the Southeast Alternatives of Minneapolis, Minnesota. She is known nationally as a frequent speaker on alternatives.

What good do alternatives do?

NSBA: You've seen many alternative schools all over the country, and you've worked with a lot of people involved with them in different capacities. What evidence of good things have you seen come out of alternative schools? What benefits have they reaped?

FANTINI: Good things have happened educationally, politically and economically. Let's talk education. Alternatives are a more advanced way of individualizing. Every philosophy of education, of any school system, is dedicated to individualized learning and individualized instruction. One way to individualize is to match the style of teaching with the style of learning, and that's what alternatives are about.

There are indications that teachers and students and parents profit from alternative schools. Teachers benefit psychologically because they have the choice to select a style. Parents and students also make choices. And then they come together, again, not by chance, as it was before alternatives, but by choice.

We have testimonies and evaluations pointing out that alternatives have provided chances for people to go on to higher education. I myself have talked to I-don't-know-how-many students who have indicated they were bored and turned off to education but now that they were involved in an alternative they seemed to be reconnected with education and wanted to go on to higher education.

Educationally, it has increased the opportunity to personalize. Alternatives have begun to break down the mass production of schooling, in other words, everybody going through pretty much the same process. Often schools of an alternative environment are much smaller than others, so you get much more attention to the individual. You're not just another face in a big crowd; people get to know you. And I think that also has value.

So the educational benefits are that we individualize, we personalize, we break down mass production.

Unfortunately with the old model of education, everybody had to adjust to whatever the model was. For those who were fortunate enough to be able to adjust, fine. But for those who were not, they were pushed off into a track of some kind and labeled. And a way of labeling people is a way of thinking about them. If you're put into a "slow" track, people begin to say, "well, this is the slow group." You can almost come to think of yourself as being slow. Under alternatives, you break down the labeling of the person.

"I don't care whether you're an educational conservative or liberal, whatever those terms mean. There is something there for you." Fantini

---

NSBA: What good political changes have resulted from alternative schools?

FANTINI: All right, politically, there is something for everyone here. It's a pluralistic concept of education. And it says that people who prefer traditional education have that right. Those who prefer a more flexible arrangement have that right. But no one has the right to impose one model on anybody else.

Right now we are imposing a model, and this is divisive. We have people who are unhappy with it and they organize and put pressure on the schools to change. They will try to elect different school board members. So a school board member comes in talking about one kind of education or another kind of education, as if that's it, you know, either/or. Under this plan, I don't care whether you're an educational conservative or liberal, whatever those things mean. There is something there for you.

What I'm saying is that, politically, alternatives should help resolve conflict. Now we are in a state of political conflict in the schools. We have a constant struggle—those who are satisfied, versus those who are dissatisfied. This disturbs the climate for everybody. Under alternatives, as long as programs are truly options, as long as each is legitimate politically, it gives the whole spectrum a chance to choose, rather than forcing one model on everybody and inviting conflict.

"Alternatives mean that you don't constantly try to add on more money. . . ." Fantini

NSBA: What are the economic benefits of alternatives?

FANTINI: Alternatives mean that you don't constantly try to add on more money as a way of improving one model, which has been costly. You end up with an improved single model of education, where you can say, "O.K. now, we're reaching 60% whereas before we were reaching only 55%." Right now we're in a period where 100% of the people require quality education, not 60%. Studies show that in no case are we reaching 100%, not in any model.

NSBA: You can't satisfy everyone with any one educational model?

FANTINI: That's correct. But if you have variety, then you begin to increase your opportunities to do that. For example, Montessori education is fine, but if you were to say that's it for everybody, then Montessori would have just as many problems as traditional education. Or if you said open classrooms for everybody, open classrooms would have just as many problems as traditional classrooms. Any one might reach 60% of the population. But if you have three or four side by side, and you give people the chance to investigate them, you increase the number of people significantly who are satisfied and who profit. So any one alternative is good for a number of people, but no one is good for everyone. And economically, what this means is that the old days of adding on and trying to make one model better and better are over. What this does is to say look, we have resources, but they are going to be utilized in different ways.

"If everybody in your school knows your name, it's much harder to throw a rock anonymously." Smith

NSBA: People want evidence that alternative schools will do some good. Fewer drop-outs, better test scores, less vandalism, happier students, less racial tension. Have you seen any of these benefits?

SMITH: There is evidence of all those things. There is a paragraph in the Ford Foundation report, *Matters of Choice*, that states, "Where standard measures of achievement such as test scores and college admissions are applicable, they show that alternative school students perform at least as well as their counterparts in traditional school programs, and usually better. Attendance rates almost without exception exceed those in regular schools."

There is a Phi Delta Kappa fastback on violence in schools, by Michael Berger. In it he says that there is practically no violence or vandalism in alternative schools. There was a California report on violence and vandalism a couple of years ago. And it concluded the same thing, but in a different way. It said the incidence of violence and vandalism in schools is directly related to size. With alternative schools, we usually are talking about much smaller schools. So if that statement is correct, then we know immediately they are going to have much less violence and vandalism. The example I always use is if everybody in your

school knows your name, it's much harder to throw a rock anonymously.

What we are talking about is a difference in the learning community. In most alternative schools, everybody knows everybody else. That makes for a different attitude toward learning. That doesn't mean they don't have *any* vandalism, but reports of less absenteeism, less vandalism, and less crime in the smaller alternative public schools are quite common.

In general, basic skills are probably emphasized *more* in alternative schools than in conventional schools. Maybe in different ways, but the results are often better. In other words, they are taking kids from conventional schools, and in alternate schools the kids are actually making more progress in reading in a year than they did in a conventional school. You can almost change a reading test score by the attitude of the kid. And their attitudes are better. Some kids are just not academically motivated by tests. If you have them in a smaller alternative school and they like the school, if you say to them we have to do well on the reading test or they'll shut us down, then you find the kids do well on the reading test. I think it is mostly the attitude of the students. At the Community High School in Ann Arbor, when the kids are below grade level in reading, they say to the kid you ought to be assigned to the reading room. The kid can then choose to go or not to go. If he chooses to go, he is not given any instruction. It's just a place where kids go to spend a period reading. The person there helps them find something they would be interested in reading. They find out in tests that most of those kids are making about a year's growth in a year. And that's something they haven't done before. This is all a part of what the good alternatives do.

First of all, the idea of having a system of alternatives produces schools that are more responsive to the needs of more students, the community, a diverse clientele. One attitudinal change you get immediately is that when people have chosen something, they tend to be more loyal to it. Having choice gives people a better attitude toward school.

"We learn how to use differences as educational advantages. . . ." Zander

ZANDER: I think the first good you would have to list is that we finally seem to have arrived at something that will do a fair job of adapting to the learner, rather than expecting the kid to adapt to the system. We are recognizing that there are markedly different styles in learning and teaching. We now have some systems that speak to that, in a sense capitalize on it, instead of ignoring it. That has to be alternatives' greatest strength. Alternatives appear to be on the trail of making really significant changes. They rest on the fact that we learn how to use differences as educational advantages rather than liabilities. Taking advantage of our differences is very consistent with a culturally plural society.

Alternatives are certainly not a panacea. It is probably not wise to make any assumptions that alternatives are going to be *better* than something else. Although it may be the case that test scores will improve or that other good things will happen, don't insist on it.

If we can acknowledge that people learn in different ways, and say that it is OK to do that, then we include more people in the educational process. Particularly on the secondary level, where our history of pushing kids out of school is a pretty sad commentary on what schools are doing. We can now say that just because you can't make it in the regular stream of things, you're still all right. If the regular program doesn't suit you, some other kinds of programs which you may choose are available. So we are getting students who can stay in school and who can find avenues to graduation which are acceptable, instead of not being able to finish school and going into that whole failure syndrome.

NSBA: What are some of the good things you've seen come out of alternative programs? What are the benefits they have reaped?

WALDRIP: Almost invariably, higher achievement, in the cognitive domain. And the reduction of racial isolation.

NSBA: Now, you have seen that in Cincinnati?

WALDRIP: Definitely.

NSBA: Where else?

WALDRIP: Well, they're trying to do it in other places, but it hasn't been quite as successful as it has been here. They have done it to a degree, though, in several places. Minneapolis, for example. We've probably made more progress than anybody else.

NSBA: Is that because of the length of time your programs have been in operation?

WALDRIP: No We're just in our third year. It's because of a lot of things. Selling them. Good recruitment. Holding principals accountable for helping recruit students. Calling upon them to be totally unselfish.

We have happier teachers, parents and kids. We also have an attraction back to the city. This past year we had 1,076 kids return from private and parochial schools to the public schools. We have 37 paying tuition to come in from the county to attend our alternatives. That's not much yet, but it will be more, I think. It takes total commitment, a lot of energy, and you even have to risk alienating teachers in neighborhood schools. You have to risk some things in order to make these go. You have to sell not only that they are options, but also that they are *good* educational programs.

"We have virtually no drop-outs from our optional programs." Waldrip

---

NSBA: Have you seen any evidence of less vandalism or fewer drop-outs?

WALDRIP: We have virtually no drop-outs from our optional programs. Certainly less vandalism and fewer discipline problems. This sounds like some kind of be-all, end-all. I'm sorry that it does. But it's a fact and all you have to do is come and look at them.

GLINES: Interest in choices for people is really essential now. Life styles have changed dramatically in the country. I'll give you a quick example that ties this together in a practical setting. Here in California, I direct the year-round education project. We've done surveys in our state. We've found that just in terms of vacations alone, without mentioning all the learning opportunities, 30 percent of our people in California *have* to take their vacations between September and June. Otherwise, they can't get one. We found that another 20 to 25 percent *prefer* to have their vacations sometime between September and June. All over the state, now, if people are given the *choice* between a nine-month calendar and a year-round calendar, it is automatically guaranteed that between 50 and 60 percent will volunteer for the year-round calendar. That gives you a concrete example of how, if you provide options, it really does help people. It does humanize the whole process of education. After being in it four years, 83 percent of the families prefer the year-round calendar, according to a study just completed at USC. What we're finding is that when you give people choices on a select-the-best-for-you basis, they really use options and alternatives different from what we call the conventional school or requirements. We can really humanize the learning process for people.

NSBA: Does this make for happier students, or less absenteeism, or what?

GLINES: Definitely. Less absenteeism, less illness, students' attitudes toward school are much better. We get the I-want-to-go-to-school kind of thing.

MULCAHY: One of the best things to come out of alternatives is the mechanism many of them have used, built on John Dewey's old concept of homeroom. They may be called home groups, or something else, but they provide a means for students and teachers to continually get together to plan, counsel, just talk and whatever. You keep in very close touch with one another with this sort of mechanism. And that's a good part of what education is all about. Some schools do it every day, say early, before everyone goes in a different direction. At Shanti we did it once a week; that seemed to be often enough.

What problems do alternatives create?

NSBA: What are some of the problems you have seen alternative learning environments cause?

GLINES: The first mistake was the use of the word alternatives. We ought to eliminate that entirely, unless we always use it in the plural form. There is a series of alternative programs in a district. And that includes what was formerly called the regular or the traditional program. In other words, there is a series of options available in the community. One of the biggest mistakes we've made, which has given us all kinds of trouble, is a district saying "this is the regular program, and this is the alternative." By using this idea of the alternative and the regular, we split the liberals and conservatives, the old fogies and the young whippersnappers, and it causes community conflict. Throughout the country, we've gotten into all kinds of win-lose battles, where someone has to win and someone has to lose. People have looked at it as an either-or proposition. Those who try to change the establishment have to fight, have to try to defend what they are trying to do. The answer to overcome that is to adopt a win-win spirit.

We are a pluralistic society. Diversity is our strength now. If we don't understand the win-win philosophy, we're all going to end up with a lose-lose situation. The biggest problem alternatives have caused is that people have not understood the concept of win-win. They have not understood how alternatives really can be more humane for families and students. We've gotten boxed into this trap that one way is the best way for everyone. Then when a new program is proposed, that new program is always faced with that win-lose thinking. What people are afraid of partly, is that when that alternative gets started, it will become *the* "regular" program. They are so used to everyone having to do everything the same way, that they're afraid if they let that get going, it soon might become the majority thinking. If a majority goes along with it, it might become required of everybody.

NSBA: How is misunderstanding solved, from the outset?

GLINES: Two things have to be done right away. The district, the school board, superintendent, administrators, etc., have to go over and over and over what we mean about win-win philosophy in education.

Second, it takes leadership to make sure that, when new programs are implemented, we don't get into that win-lose bickering kind of thing. You almost have to bang people in the head and say, "the first time I hear you say anything about those old fogies over there, or about those wild liberals, we're going to spank you" kind of thing. What you have to do is give equal praise to all the programs. You have to give equal financing and stress the fact that they are all regular programs. You have to say program A has excellent teachers, an excellent program, they can all go to college, all get a job; program B and C, the same thing. The only difference is in how each program operates. But they all meet common goals. That means we all have to give a little, so we can all get a little. If you go at that thing of equal priase and equal support, that's the key thing, along with win-win. Once you sell the win-win thing, the people who see alternatives as a threat won't get after you with the idea that the alternative is going to become the regular program. A syndrome of our society has been that whatever that 51 percent votes, we all get.

"Most of these programs have started for the wrong reasons. . . ." Glines

One of the things that has been wrong with alternative schools takes place in big high schools all over the country. Say you have 2,200 students. Twenty-one hundred kids stay in the regular program and they put 100 kids in the alternative program. That never works. It always goes down the drain. It has to be a critical mass in order to survive. Most of these programs have started for the wrong reasons, you know, for drop-out kids, unwed mothers. The only reasons those programs have gotten started in so many districts is because the traditional teachers have finally said, "oh my God, we don't want those kids in our classes. So if you'll take them, we'll go along with an alternative program." What they do then is pull out four or five teachers and let them recruit the hundred clunkers. Unfortunately, that's been a big problem with the alternative movement around the country.

NSBA: Well, how much is critical mass?

GLINES: The critical mass has to be large enough so that you no longer have to defend yourselves to be accepted as a visible part of the program. In a number of the schools I'm working with right now, the majority of the students don't even know the alternative programs exist. They haven't been put in the student guides, they haven't been publicized. The key thing—the programs can afford to be small, as long as you've got four or five of those operating. Even one can be big, say a thousand, with three or four of only a hundred kids each. Then the old "regular" program becomes just one of the alternatives. All five or six are regular choices. If you don't have that kind of approach, you'll just never make it.

Again, to be a really good alternative program, you have to have a cross section of the student body. Unless you have smarties and dummies, greens and pinks, Catholics and Lutherans (if you want to label people), you're going to get in trouble every time.

"A big problem has been the . . . misdirected hesitance of some administrators to involve anybody else. . . ." Smith

SMITH: I think a big problem has been the real, sincere, misdirected hesitance of some administrators to involve anybody else—the school board, parents, or teachers. There is a tendency among the administration to try to keep planning within the administration building. That's the first obstacle we see in planning.

A major problem is that if you open one alternative school, a lot of people immediately sign up for it. This includes teachers as well as students. They may *not* be the people for whom this school would be the most suitable. They may be the people who are most anxious to get out of the other schools. The problem with that is that they may have very different and conflicting ideas of what an alternative school should be. The *only* way you can avoid that problem is to spell out in advance, as accurately as you can, a picture of what the new school wants to accomplish. But you're still going to get some of those people. I would be very reluctant to see the whole staff come from teachers who chose to get out, because you may just be getting a lot of disgruntled people.

Consider several alternatives at the same time. By talking about several alternatives, you would be helping people to see that some would be better for them than others. You don't have to start them all. But by involving the people you think are going into the alternative, during the planning, it may become obvious in the planning stage that some people are not ready for what they think they are ready for.

You have three different levels of problems. I've talked about some of what I would call implementation problems. You have a whole host of operational problems. Like if a school is not going to give grades, what is it going to do about transcripts for college admissions? What are you going to do about accreditation? If it's not going

to be in a regular school building, you've got the fire and safety regulations to check into. School boards and their administrators and attorneys already know that any school has to meet certain standards. So the operational problems usually aren't that great.

What some districts have done about the college admission problem is ask all the colleges in the area if that is going to be a problem. Walden III up in Racine, Wisconsin, wrote to all the colleges in Wisconsin and said we are going to do this, is this going to create any problems for admissions for our kids? Practically all the colleges wrote back and said no, it wouldn't be any problem.

"You have a number of policy problems that boards will be stuck with." Smith

But there are some other problems we haven't talked about and they are in the area of policy problems. If a board is willing to give choice, are they prepared then to give all the legal choices they might be asked for? That can become a big problem. In other words, if they are willing to have an open school, are they also willing to have a fundamental school? They really have to believe that different parents have a right to different kinds of schools. What steps are they going to take to make sure that a group that is asking for an alternative school isn't really a racist group, isn't really a religious group or any kind of a group that has a vested interest that is not really democratic? You do have a number of policy problems that boards will be stuck with. And it is hard to know how to handle those.

NSBA: Have you seen some problems develop as a result of alternative schools being established?

FANTINI: Yes. Number one, the notion that we are going to consider alternatives another fad. Everybody says, "I have to do this," and they mount a program. They'll have a school that's empty because of declining enrollment, and so they'll say, let's start a school for unwed mothers. That's the wrong way to go about it. I don't want to label any human being. Once you label somebody and say this is who the school is for, someone who is a potential drop-out or someone who has done something wrong, then it educates everybody to what alternatives are all about. "Alternatives have something to do with people who have problems"; and that's not what I'm saying. I'm saying alternatives are a way of personalizing learning for anybody. The first generation has emphasized alternatives, relabeling things they are already doing with more contemporary labels like alternatives or options, but business as usual. And that's really not what I'm talking about.

NSBA: Do you think the practice of relabeling old concepts will change?

FANTINI: Yes, it's changing now, because a lot of us are beginning to say this. Many schools are beginning to find out that if they start off that way a lot of parents don't want to get into it, saying, "there's nothing wrong with my child; why should I send him to an alternative?"

The other mistake is that people have moved into it without enough planning. You can't impose this. You can't come out all of a sudden and say, "OK, we're creating an open classroom," without people understanding the philosophy behind pluralism, and what it means to the parent, what it means to the youngster and what it means to the teacher. So one of the major problems is that sometimes not enough time has been spent in a dialogue involving the parties who are interested.

MULCAHY: I think it's important that we point out that alternative programs are not for bad kids, they are not programs to deal with kids who are disruptive, a move to get kids out of our hair. That is a very common misconception.

There is the contrary problem as well. That is, the schools are perceived as being only for exceptional students, kids who are exceptionally bright. That is just as bad. Or the problem is sometimes seeing alternatives as something for those students who are most alienated from school, socially rather than behaviorally.

NSBA: How do schools avoid a situation where people think alternatives are only for certain kinds of students?

MULCAHY: By keeping the definition in mind. Alternatives should be developed for parents and students who are seeking choice. Keep everyone aware that we are talking about choices. I've stopped using "alternative" and use "optional" or "optional programs." The reason for this is that there are many programs which call themselves alternatives, but which are part of the special education offerings, to which kids are mandated. That's baloney! It's trying to convince kids you're doing something specially for them, when you don't mean to do that at all. Your real goal is to get rid of disruptive kids.

"You cannot put in an alternative school in reaction to the regular school." Zander

NSBA: What are the problems you have seen develop with the introduction of alternatives?

ZANDER: The competitive thing is certainly a key to this. You cannot put in an alternative school in reaction to the regular school. You can't communicate through inference that the regular school is not humane. The process involves endorsing the regular school and the alternative programs as being equally valid because different kinds of people need different kinds of programs. If you get on some kind of philosophical ego trip saying that there is only one way to educate students, then you substitute one orthodoxy for another, which is where we were when we started out. What we need is endorsement of different paths to virtually the same goal.

One unfortunate thing that often happens is that people think they have an alternative, but it is a program into which children are actually put. This is not an alternative program. If an alternative program is devised for children who are not doing well or who are "acting up," it seems to me you may call it some kind of an alternative program, but the element of choice is not present. The element of choice *has* to be present. That rules out a lot of things that are happening that people think are alternative programs. This is a real danger.

WALDRIP: The only thing that I can think of, and I've said this every time I've made a presentation, is that new programs attract the children of motivated parents. And that usually means you have motivated kids.

NSBA: How can it be bad to have motivated kids?

WALDRIP: Well, it's not bad for the particular alternative, but it's bad for the conventional schools. Alternatives hurt the neighborhood school. But since neighborhood schools are not very high on my priority list, I don't care too much about the neighborhood school concept. But a lot of people do. Consequently, when kids leave a neighborhood school to go to an alternative school, the neighborhood school can be hurt. Alternatives don't necessarily attract brighter kids, but they attract motivated kids.

NSBA: What about criticism about students in alternatives not meeting basic skills requirements?

WALDRIP: All of our alternative programs meet basic skills requirements better than regular programs. We can document that with test scores.

How can creative planning processes be initiated?

NSBA: School board members and administrators alike are concerned about how to create, how to plan for alternatives. What do they need to do?

FANTINI: You can't make a quantum leap into alternatives. You've got to give people time to plan. Where it works best people *have* taken time to plan. When you're starting something that's different, you have to make sure all the parties understand and have had some role in the formulation of the alternative.

"If everybody makes up his own rules as you go along, then you're going to get into conflict." Fantini

---

NSBA: Do you think all the interested parties should get involved in the planning?

FANTINI: Yes, I do. I think that school boards, superintendents and professionals have a special responsibility. It seems to me especially the school board, as gatekeepers of public education, have to say, "let's have a dialogue on this. Let's have reports that say this is legitimate and then have forums for discussion, at the individual school level."

Have people come in. I've been to those meetings, and somebody says, "will you explain what this is," and I explain, then there are questions, and then from that point they say, "OK, we had an expert who explained it to us, and we're going to continue the dialogue ourselves."

So School A goes back and it begins to talk more with parents and so forth, and School B does the same thing. All under the auspices of the school board saying, "we brought everybody together to consider alternative education which some people feel educationally is sound. We owe it to our community to consider this."

You trigger this with some kind of conference. Invite community people to come there. Then follow it up with meetings at the individual school level. Out of this process of participation will come a form that is appropriate for School A, and another one for School B. But everybody understands that this is happening and why it's happening. Newspapers are brought into it; they report it.

It's not something that a few people do in isolation. If nobody knows about it, people say, "what are they doing over there?" That invites conflict, when it is not stated as a leadership thing by the board of education saying, "we are going to explore this thing together and we have sufficient evidence to suggest that this is something we ought to consider. The purpose of this forum today is for us to become more aware of it, to initiate a debate, for our school system at this time." Everybody is brought into it.

Out of this come some ground rules. Here is a mistake a lot of school systems make. If you're going to initiate a new pattern, if you're going to play a new game, then the first thing is the rules for playing this game. If everybody makes up his own rules as you go along, then you're going to get into conflict.

Have a policy for exploring this thing. Every

alternative that is designed has to meet the objectives of public education.

You can't say I'm going to have open classroom, but I'm not going to deal with the basics. For a school board to legitimitize or approve anything, that alternative has to demonstrate how it gets at the basics. It has to demonstrate how it gets at the other objectives for which the school system is accountable. You can't leave this to chance.

That's why the school board is there. It can't legitimize an ill-defined notion of an alternative.

Another ground rule is non-exclusivity. Another is maintaining the same per pupil cost. You can't impose an alternative; it has to be a cooperative thing. A school system has to establish its ground rules.

MULCAHY: You should figure out how much time you'll need to plan it and then double it. It takes a lot of time to get it to work right, with all the constituencies involved.

I think you should involve teachers, administrators, board members, kids, parents—the whole shooting match. I'm co-authoring a book now, called *How to Start Your Own Public School.* It'll be out in the spring of '77. This describes the whole process. To get all the pieces in place takes about a year, because you want to involve everybody.

I've got a sort of prescription for that. It's in the December, 1974, issue of *New Schools Exchange.* It is about a dozen steps to go through. I suggest in that to collect the people who are interested and then start planning. You bang it out among those people. You test run it. Try to conceive of everything that could go wrong, and plan for it. Plan some system to deal with it. Then you recruit your staff and kids for the school.

I really believe in involving kids in fiscal planning and in understanding budgets, as well as in the educational planning. It is really important that everybody who is going to be involved in the enterprise gets in on the planning of it. Some of the fun parts are what kinds of courses are we going to have, what kinds of resources are we going to have. But the really tough parts are designing the structure and developing an educational philosophy that is reflected in a very sane, reasonable structure.

"Politically, the more people you can get to take credit for it, the better." Mulcahy

---

NSBA: Can the planning group get too large?

MULCAHY: Probably not, because people will drop out. I believe in letting everybody take credit for it. Politically, the more people you can get to take credit for it, the better. But it's legitimate; a lot of people *are* needed to make the thing happen.

NSBA: School board members are concerned about how to create, plan alternative programs. How should a community go about planning options?

WALDRIP: A good sensitive superintendent could just sit down and do this. But that's not the best way to go.

The best way probably is to involve as many people as possible. But decisions should be made by the board and the administration. They should take input, but they shouldn't take it all because it's not all valid. Decide what programs will sell. Get the information any way you can. This can be surveys, this can be intuition.

Then you've got to be very careful where you place alternative programs. They have to be placed where they will attract. And that doesn't mean a neighborhood that's all white or all black. That means in strategic locations. We started by talking with the area directors; those are the people to whom the principals report. They set up community meetings. Then we worked with PTAs, and with the media. We had a huge campaign to sell the alternatives.

We didn't have a lot of time the first year. We just had six weeks. We started two programs in six weeks. One of the two is our most popular and

famous, the Creative and Performing Arts School. The next year we added many programs. But they had a lot of time.

NSBA: So you don't think several months are required to plan an option?

WALDRIP: That is an excuse. It's an excuse not to do anything.

NSBA: How should a school district go about planning alternative educational programs?

ZANDER: Ideally, I think planning takes about a year. If there is interest within the district, regardless of where it is coming from, the first thing that should happen is people sitting down and talking together. Regardless of where the impetus is, all parties should talk, become aware of how other people are feeling and what others' reactions are.

You need to prepare very well what you are planning to do. Don't go at it in a haphazard way. Be sure that when you do some kind of needs assessment, interest survey of parents or teachers, or whatever else, you have a pretty well defined idea that people can react to. This way people are not reacting to some kind of philosophy of one person or a small group of people. Some groundwork has been laid, so that as people are asked how they feel about this thing, they can react to a range of possibilities rather than suggesting that all schools will be changed to one possibility. That is crucial.

I think that the involvement of board, of staff, and of community is needed from the outset. By community, I'm thinking of the school community, primarily. But the larger community certainly needs to be informed, at a minimum, and brought in if at all possible.

NSBA: After you have presented something specific to parents, should parents be brought in to help finalize details about a school, or should that be left to principals and teachers?

ZANDER: I think you need to spell that out from the outset too. Define what roles the various groups will play. Make it clear that community participation is an equal partner in an *advisory* capacity. Decisions are going to be made upon the advice of lots of different people. But responsibility rests with the educators, and ultimately with the board of education. It has to be spelled out that people are being invited into the process, but their decisions are advisory in the sense that the school is still going to make the final decisions.

It is very fortunate if you have a year for planning. That gives you enough time to involve the people who need to be involved. It gives you time to do a careful job.

GLINES: The key thing is that the board has to adopt a resolution, saying they support the concept of win-win. "To provide options in the district is no longer a matter of whether we should or should not. We're going to." If the board isn't going to say they believe in alternatives and options and support them, then you're in trouble. If they will give that philosophy the go-ahead, then they should say, "we want you to bring us a plan as to how to do this."

I can guarantee you that in any district in the country that I go into, 30 percent of the people automatically want a very different, more open, more flexible, more futuristic educational program. They're ready for dramatic change. They really are. Thirty percent, basically, are very much opposed to any change. They see it as a threat. We have all kinds of minorities in a school district. We really don't have any majorities. We should provide a series of alternatives for the series of minorities we have in a community. That recognizes the diversity in our society, the pluralism. Our strength lies in recognizing this and capitalizing on it.

"There is a common framework you have to operate within: The policies of the district and financial constraints." Glines

---

NSBA: Do you let people who make up each of those minorities design their own alternatives?

GLINES: Basically. There is a common frame-

work you have to operate within: The policies of the district and financial constraints. And you have some common goals. For example, a common goal for all of us is the preservation of the biosphere. How do you help kids understand about preservation of the biosphere? Well, that can be done in a conventional type of program and in a more open, flexible program. It can be done in a community-based program. But you can reach consensus that that kind of thing really needs to be done in education.

NSBA: What do you do to create alternatives, to plan them?

SMITH: You start at two levels at once. Assess the need within your community for alternatives. Assuming there is a need, then you need to get a broad based group involved in the planning, including parents and teachers.

"You don't want somebody planning alternatives for somebody else." Smith

---

You don't want somebody planning alternatives for somebody else. Keep other people informed, but primarily have people in the planning group who might actually be interested in pursuing this. Parents who might be interested in the school for their kids. Teachers who might be interested in moving into the alternative program. You try to involve the group who might become the core for alternative schools, should you decide to have them.

NSBA: There is disagreement as to how long planning activities should take.

SMITH: I think the shorter the better. I would say never longer than one year. Nobody should predetermine what a community is going to plan.

I can see different things happening which would entail different levels of planning. Suppose a group of parents comes to the board and says, "we really want an open school." It seems to me then that if the board is sympathetic toward that, it ought to arrange a several-month planning needs assessment. First the board would almost have to decide they are going to have a school that opens at a specific date, then set up a planning group that would work specifically planning that school.

The other thing I can see happening is a group of parents or somebody else being interested in the whole concept of alternatives. They don't really have a specific school in mind. Maybe they want to develop several different schools within the system. Then the planning process is going to have to take considerably longer.

The school board should be in on it right from the beginning. There shouldn't be any planning committees set up in the community without the school board either being aware or being the authorizing agency for those groups.

How much do alternative schools cost?

NSBA: People are concerned that alternative programs will cost more. They wonder where they can get the money. Is that a valid concern?

ZANDER: I think it is a *real* concern. I question its validity. Of the money that *is* being spent on schools, it's just a question of how you are going to deploy that. Are you going to continue to spend your resources the same way you have in the past, or are you going to take those same dollars and use them another way? I'm particularly referring to the need for alternative schools to have some kind of community liaison. This is a person who serves as a link between the school and the community. You can view this as an extra position, which you can add on and will cost more money. Or you can say we will stop paying money for something else so that we can have a community liaison person for the length of time we need that person.

Additional help at the outset will certainly assist the process. But I do *not* think, by any means, it is *necessary* before you can have an alternative school program. The district needs only to be willing to use its resources in different ways. It may mean that the money that you use for aides for a year might go to pay for a program coordinator, for example. Or use the money that goes into staff development, which most districts spend anyway, to concentrate on the changes that the staff is trying to make.

"You need the commitment more than you need the dollars." Zander

---

NSBA: What about going outside the district for additional funds?

ZANDER: People will let this stand in their way. They will say they can't do it because they don't have the extra money. Of the alternative schools today, half were started without any additional funding. You need the commitment more than you need the dollars. If you want to use not having dollars as an excuse, you probably don't want to do it anyway.

It often follows that if you get something interesting going, it's not too hard to get outside resources. They are attracted, I think, to programs that are doing something. Local businesses, volunteers who come in—these are things that start happening because it looks as though something promising is going on. It may be hard to sell people on that before you actually have something going. But it does tend to follow.

NSBA: How much do alternative programs cost?

FANTINI: This need not cost more money. Rearrange what you have. For example, say you have four first grades. You can have two that are traditional, one Montessori and one British—three different models. It is conceivable that you have four teachers right now on the payroll whose styles can be liberated. I've been proposing liberating teachers' styles as a way of starting options. These teachers and classrooms are already there. Changes can be made within the existing budget. If, over time, you need to retool a teacher, according to a style that is more responsive to the demands of parents and students, then you go to staff development. Every budget I know of has inservice training.

Resources are already being utilized. You need a policy that says over time we're going to have multiple learning environments in schools A, B,

and C, and these are ways of personalizing learning, and these are all legitimate. Then you see everything happening in a different way. Budgets are simply an expression of the program we have. What I'm asking for, economically, is reutilizing available resources and tapping resources in the community which may not cost any more money. When you have options you can say we are going to use tutors from the community, we're going to use artists, poets, lawyers, newspaper reporters, and the like.

"If it costs more money, then we're repeating the mistakes of the past." Fantini

---

NSBA: So you would say to a district that wants to personalize programs that it is possible to do so within the regular budget, that it doesn't have to cost more money.

FANTINI: No, it doesn't have to cost more money, but it does mean that you are going to utilize what you have a little differently. In the past, what we have done is just continue everything we were doing and then add on. Every time you add on, something has to give, or you have to increase the budget. We have staff development money, equipment money, supplies money; we have all of these, and with a new policy of pluralism, these can be used differently. One of my ground rules is that it doesn't cost more money. If it costs more money, then we're repeating the mistakes of the past.

On the other hand, there are states, California for example, that have passed legislation for alternative schools. They have promoted it as a statewide policy, enabling school districts to respond to diversity in their communities. I think other states will begin to consider this.

WALDRIP: They don't have to cost a lot more. Start-up costs might be some. *Some* of them will require *some* additional money. If you have a bilingual alternative, you have to have bilingual teachers. If you get into an IGE League, you have to have the aides that IGE calls for, or you can't be in the League. Most alternatives cost *no* more. College prep alternatives don't cost more. Fundamental schools don't cost any more.

NSBA: How do you justify some programs costing more than others? Don't you get the complaint from citizens who say, "that kid's education costs more than my kid's?"

WALDRIP: But they're options! That parent can send his kid to that school. If one costs $2,000 more than another, they're still open. They are public schools. Some can cost less. A college prep program can have a higher pupil/teacher ratio. Ones that kids have to qualify for, I think, should not cost more than the average per pupil cost. But if they are open to everybody, I think you can justify programs costing a little more.

NSBA: You've mentioned equal financing as being important for alternatives. In your experience, do alternatives not have to cost more than the regular or traditional program?

GLINES: No, they *shouldn't* cost any more. You can't justify additional cost, unless there is some really specialized need, like for handicapped kids. They are all regular programs and should all be supported equally.

Let's say you have an elementary school with 17 teachers. It's a traditional elementary school; it has seventeen classrooms, seventeen teachers, and it is budgeted accordingly. You can start three different alternative programs in that school, at no additional cost. You can have seven teachers, K-6, operate in seven rooms in one wing of the building, or one end of it, or just seven rooms, where they operate on a nine-month calendar, they teach in self-contained rooms, a very conventional program. It's not bad or wrong. It's just one type of alternative. Five teachers can use five other rooms and go into some sort of team teaching. Maybe something like the Individually Guided Education thing out of Wisconsin, the IGE approach. The other five teachers in the school can take another multi-aged group of kids, K-6, and do a very open, flexible, individualized type of program. All three programs operate in the same building, the same number of staff, and the same budget.

It doesn't take any remodeling. There is no reason at all for that to cost a penny more. So you can have three alternative programs in the same neighborhood school.

The only need for additional cost is when you find a need for what I call catch-up money. When I started a program in Minnesota eight years ago, I went to the powers that be and said, "Look, we've got two tape recorders in the entire school. I don't think that's wild and woolly. Couldn't we have some tape recorders? I want to put some carpet in the kindergarten area." We went through and found some things that would enhance the program, and we wanted some money for them. But those are things we should have been doing all along.

"If you can't connive and scrimp, you do the program with what you have." Glines

Sometimes you have to wait four or five years to get the money pumped into it. You get a little bit each year to try to catch up. If the district can, the nice thing to do with the start of a new alternative, is to provide some catch-up money. The only time you need more help is in an area the district has fudged on earlier. You use everything you can. You connive, scrimp, steal. But if you don't have any additional money and you can't connive and scrimp, you do the program with what you have.

The year I started the Wilson program, I got there in July. The teachers were all hired, the budget was all set, the maintenance had been done, the textbooks were all purchased. But we started our program in September. We turned the whole school upside-down. With exactly the same staff and budget, materials, nothing new. Over the eight years that the program has been in existence we've made massive changes, but the school has always had the so-called regular budget. The first year we did get some catch-up money for tape recorders, a little carpeting and paint. You can get into some money for remodeling, but you don't have to go all-out the first year. At Wilson, we just cut some doors through walls; we didn't even take out the walls.

The major costs are in time and energy. The only time it has to cost extra *money* is when a district decides to make an alternative in an additional site.

MULCAHY: I don't think they should cost more. Unless there is a special reason, the program shouldn't cost more than the per pupil cost of the appropriate age level of the kids. Now if there is a special program for talented scientists, it may cost more.

NSBA: How do you justify extra program cost to the public?

MULCAHY: Well, I guess if I were a board member, I wouldn't. I'm not an advocate of that kind of program. But some people feel that if we have people with special talents and abilities, we owe it to them to pay out more for them. Now, I think every board, if you look carefully at its program, will have something that costs extra. Every child doesn't come out costing the exact same amount of per pupil expenditure each year, obviously. If the board's philosophy is that that kind of expense is justified in special situations, well and good. In general, I'd say, the optional programs should *not* cost more.

NSBA: How do you avoid more cost in optional programs?

MULCAHY: Optional programs have the ability to use community resources that other schools don't. Because of things like flexible scheduling, opportunities for kids to get out of the school building to visit places, lawyers' offices, calls with plumbers, TV repair people, and that kind of thing, many of the instructional resources can be found in the city or town. This doesn't cost money. Everybody dreams of being a teacher. The work that the external consultant, neighborhood person, professional or tradesperson does, is supervised by a certified professional teacher.

SMITH: You have to plan to operate within whatever the projected per pupil cost of education within your community is. If you're going to sit back and plan a school that is going to cost twice as much per pupil as any other, we can predict

either that it is never going to get started or that it won't last long.

Now there are problems with that. First of all, we know that within most school districts there is a big differential between elementary and secondary education costs. Another problem is that some school districts do not ever release figures on per pupil costs. Particulary differences *among* schools. One school will have a much higher per pupil budget than others. In one city, for example, an alternative school cost $150 more per pupil than the *average*. But another school within the same district was costing $1,300 more than the *average* for schools within the district. It would be realistic to say alternative schools must plan to operate within the *normal range* of the per pupil costs of schools at the same level within the same community.

"There is going to be a start-up cost for an alternative . . . just as there is . . . when you start up any program." Smith

---

Most alternative schools today are probably operating at or below the per pupil cost of other schools in the district. A few are operating at a higher per pupil cost.

The problem that defeats people is start-up costs. There is going to be a start-up cost for an alternative school, just as there is always a start-up cost when you start any new conventional program. Some people assume that if you are using a building you already own, there won't be any start-up cost. This is untrue; there would be a transition cost. I don't perceive it to be very large.

We're finding that smaller schools can often operate cheaper, in many cases, than huge ones. You don't always have cafeterias, athletic fields and the maintenance of them. You don't have the bands, typically. It's very difficult to equate those things. I don't think anybody has done a study to date that has anything conclusive in this area.

Any school district starting alternatives has to have some kind of flexible arrangement so that the budget for a student follows each student. You can't let 200 kids choose an alternative school and give all the conventional schools the same budget they had before they lost the 200. It's a very tricky problem.

How are students matched with the options?

NSBA: We talk about students choosing, teachers choosing. How do you match students and schools successfully? Suppose people decide later that they have made the wrong choice?

FANTINI: This is part of the ground rules. Nobody is sentenced forever; that's not the way this is played. In the past, that's the way it has been. Suppose a student says, "I don't know. But let me try this." So you say, "well, try this." Now, after a month or so in it, maybe the person says, "I'm really not as happy as I thought I'd be." OK, try something else. But you don't write off the person. So it's not a sentencing idea where you make a decision and that's it. "You made a wrong decision, you pay for it," is the way it has been in the past. *This* is a more flexible idea of seeking a fruitful match for the learner. Everybody works to find that match. If you don't find it, you have to keep working to find the situation to support you. This kind of attitude is a very constructive one.

"As people have more experience with the schools, they make better choices." Zander

---

ZANDER: People haven't had very much experience choosing schools. At first you just make your best guess. As people have more experience with the schools, they make better choices. They tend very definitely to make different choices for different members of the family. Not all the kids in one family will end up in the same school, particularly after the first year. The ease of choice, in terms of how easy it is to change, is an important factor. It *has* to be possible for people to say that wasn't a very good decision. They need to be able to make another one and not be locked in.

Our experience in Minneapolis has been that as you make that easy for people to do, there is not a lot of changing. In Minneapolis people sign an option card at the end of the year and choose the program that they may want to go to the following year. You may change anytime during the year, but there is very little of that. I think this says that as the years have gone by, people are making better decisions.

NSBA: Have you had any experience with having to resort to lotteries or first come, first served?

ZANDER: We made the commitment that if 75 percent of the people chose one particular kind of school, then we would offer that kind of program to 75 percent of the people.

The only program for which we haven't been able to follow through on that has been the Free School. The Free School is a citywide program and there were more people who wanted to participate than there were spaces. But after it gets up to about a 150 person program, you had better look at starting another one before you make that a 350 person program. We haven't done that yet. But in all our other schools, traditional, continuous progress and open, we have been able to take everybody who chose one of those. Both the open school and the traditional program are drawing a greater number of children than they did originally.

NSBA: What about matching kids with schools oriented toward a specific subject area?

ZANDER: I think you have to be pretty careful about doing that. My own posture is watchful waiting. I hear people say that a magnet school in science can draw a good cross section of kids who have high potential. I feel differently about that than I do about a school where there is a cutoff line on a standardized test.

If those kinds of programs are based on interest, with the assumption that people really can expand given the opportunity, that may be OK. I'm very uneasy about some artificial cutoff line. "You already know enough to get in, or you don't know enough." Or, "you're talented enough to get in and you're not." That does not speak adequately to everybody's human potential.

Interest rather than ability is important. We're not very good about knowing how much potential people have. We should be trying to open doors rather than close them. This may be a way of closing doors for some people.

NSBA: What kinds of methods do you use to match students and schools?

WALDRIP: We use first come, first served, by race. Most of our programs are first come, first served.

The only thing we require for the Creative and Performing Arts School is an audition. Applicants audition in six areas: visual arts, instrumental music if they play an instrument, vocal music, creative writing, dramatics, and dance. Now a child might think he is a trumpet player, and yet get accepted in dance. The audition is the only requirement. We don't expect the kids to come trained. But if the teachers who audition them can see a talent, a latent talent, the child is accepted.

The only other program that has any admission requirement is the college prep. We have sixteen alternative programs. So that is just two out of sixteen. The college prep just requires either a past record of achievement, or, if the achievement scores are not high enough, two teachers' recommendations.

"Matching at this time can only be on the basis of choice." Smith

SMITH: Matching at this time can only be on the basis of choice. You want to give families the most accurate information available. The more information you give a family about how the alternatives are going to differ, the better the choice they will make.

NSBA: What happens when too many kids want the same choice at the same time?

SMITH: Usually you use a controlled lottery. This is typical so as to get racial and social and economic representation. Alternatives are not always full when they start.

Now there is some research going on, in two areas, that promises, at some future date, to help us match kids with learning environments. But that research is a long way from helping us now.

One area of research has been opened up by David Hunt, of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. He has developed what he calls a conceptual level matching model, where you try to match kids' cognitive development with the structure of the openness of the school. Kids who are lower in cognitive development need more structure; kids who are higher in cognitive development need less structure. He has actually tried this out with alternative schools, schools that are conventional and schools that are open. But he himself reports that there are a lot of other factors that interfere. And I'm saying that we are a long way from being able to match people.

Second, Bob Fizzell, in Skokie, Illinois, has tried to figure out how personality factors in kids are related to success and failure in school. He is trying to come up with measures of kids' personalities that would help them decide which school is better for them.

"If a kid . . . would like to be in a school . . . I think he has a legal right to be in the . . . school." Smith

NSBA: What about using standardized tests or auditions or other methods for matching students with schools?

SMITH: I don't know that tests are necessary. If a kid and his family think that he would *like* to be in a school that has, say, a science orientation, it seems to me that he has just as much right to be there as kids who are in the upper three percent in science achievement tests. We *have* cases of that, though. For example, the Bronx High School of Science in New York City has, since 1938, taken only the top three percent of the junior high graduates in science. But it seems to me that another kid in the school district who thinks he too would like to be in the science high school has a right to be in the science high school. We know a lot more now than we used to. I think he has a legal right to be in the science high school.

NSBA: What about auditions to match students with fine arts schools, for example?

SMITH: I think with something like a performing arts school it is going to work out much better. You may have some kids with an inherent interest in music, for example, who don't want to perform. But if it is made clear to them that the business of the performing arts school is to prepare people for performances, I wouldn't say a kid has to have talent. But I think you would find that kids who lacked talent are very unwilling to get into performances. So I think it kind of takes care of itself.

It's kind of like football, in a way. The kids who are talented tend to be the ones who go out for it. But a coach doesn't necessarily kick a kid off because he is not talented. If the business of a performing arts school is performance, then it seems to me you have more right to take only those who want to perform or can perform well. If you have a performing arts school with room for 400, but have 800 who want to be in the performing arts school, it seems to me the solution would be to have two performing arts schools. Whether you are going to have one with the best and one with the rest, or divide the best up evenly, would be up to the community.

Maybe a better example to use to illustrate this is an environmental school. In a way it's science. But we certainly know that our whole population needs to be a lot better prepared in terms of handling the environment tomorrow than it is today. So who is to say that a kid who is not really academically talented should not be in an environmental school? Maybe he will do much better. Maybe his problem has been that the school he has been in wasn't, as he saw it, providing anything related to his life. But in an environmental school, he may do much better because he sees a relationship between school and life.

I would take the stand, generally, that if a school is offered within a community, probably everybody in the community has a right to be thrown into the lottery or whatever. At a later date, not in this century, I think, if we were able to match kids with learning environments, then, of course, we're talking about a system which might not be choice. But that is a long way off.

GLINES: The more flexible the various programs are, the easier it is to allow students to move back and forth. What usually happens is, on a percentage basis in terms of staff, with all the students changing, the number of students in any program usually stays the same, balancing out enrollment in any given program.

"The school can still maintain final control over placing a student, if they feel they really need to." Glines

The ideal thing is to let the students make the decision entirely, with help from their parents in terms of some advice, and with some advice from the school. At Wilson we used to have what we called Family Design Conferences. Each student chose his own advisor or counselor. We told the students to find that adult that you really respect and want to work with. That's your advisor.

That advisor would sit down with the student, with mom and dad, if there were a mom and dad who were together. All of them would have input into the student's decisions. Priority weight was given to the student's desires. We would say go ahead and give it a whirl, but understand that if this doesn't work out, then we are going to reserve the right to make a switch. The school can still maintain final control over placing a student, if they feel they really need to.

NSBA: What about using auditions for a performing arts alternative, for example?

GLINES: I don't personally believe in those kinds of things, and I try not to use them wherever I am. What you find happening, say, in performing arts, is that the ones who are not really good won't try out anyway. Those who are kind of borderline may be cut because they don't have the quality. Many of them can be behind-the-scenes kinds of persons. If there is that much demand for the performing arts and many of the kids are not that good—well, the schools are supposed to be helping people learn, helping people progress. If you've got a bunch of kids who want to learn and develop through the medium of performing arts, expand the program. Make your program bigger.

I just don't have any kind of testing requirements in schools where I have any authority. We try to get everybody in who wants in. And those who have a special talent have all kinds of outlets. When it finally comes down to choosing the cast for *The Wizard of Oz*, out of all those kids around there working, we all know one kid is going to be the Wizard. Kids can accept that. But you can have a second play for the others, or a back-up for the Wizard, or another teacher can work with a smaller group of kids in a less demanding play. Or they could be doing the costuming.

We've all got to become generalists first, before we can become specialists. Students have to understand the comprehensive whole before they can specialize. What you try to do is interrelate all these things. When that happens you don't have to worry about cutting kids off from performing arts.

You don't have to have alternative programs specializing in one thing or the other. A good school has all those things in it.

How are alternatives evaluated?

NSBA: Evaluation of alternative schools will concern board members. How and when should evaluation take place?

MULCAHY: It's going to take a couple of years before you can assess the program effectively. Accountability and evaluation should be built in and agreed upon by all parties from the beginning and as the thing moves along.

I have a theory on evaluation. First of all, in terms of the objective testing that people are interested in, reading scores, computational skills and that sort of thing, I think that the alternative school kids ought to take whatever kinds of tests the district gives. The expectation should be that they will do no worse than expected. Now that means, obviously, that if you get a bunch of kids who are low achievers in a school, you can't hold them up against the norm. That would be unfair. But given whatever you need to do to compensate for that statistic, you do it. They shouldn't do any worse.

But that's a kind of hold-the-line evaluation. What I recommend is a second tier of evaluation. The board and the administration people from the school design their own evaluations and their own criteria. Those must be agreed upon before and during program operation.

NSBA: What would evaluation criteria include?

MULCAHY: Well, it could include things like parent satisfaction indices, how pleased the parents are with the program. It could include admissions statistics to colleges or vocational programs. It could include demonstration of skills acquisition. It could include social goals, the ability of people to function better socially. It would depend upon what everybody could agree upon. You have to have a consensus on what the goals of the program are. What is the alternative trying to achieve? Frequently there is a serious breakdown among the board, administration and other school people in terms of that. Those things have to be dealt with honestly and openly. That kind of open communication is really necessary. There should be no fear and apprehension about it.

"An alternative school ought to be accountable to the board and there ought to be an annual understanding of what the board is getting for its money." Mulcahy

---

NSBA: What do you do with evaluation results?

MULCAHY: There are used quite appropriately, I think, in the board's determination whether to continue and refund the program. Alternative programs depend, either directly or indirectly, on line items in a board's budget. I think the school ought to be accountable to the board and that there ought to be an annual understanding of what the board is getting for its money. I'd put the responsibility, once the goals are clear, once the processes are determined, on the alternative school program, in terms of how to collect and present the data. I don't envision board members sitting around, licking stamps and mailing out questionnaires. Once the parameters are established, the school should be held responsible for presenting the data. If they need assistance in that, that should be an administration function.

NSBA: Do you think these results should be used to publicize the program, to change the program or what?

"Evaluation's real purpose is to help kids." Mulcahy

MULCAHY: Evaluation's real purpose is to help kids. There has to be some kind of a direct relationship between the evaluation and helping kids. Another value of evaluation is to inform the public. Another very direct value of evaluation is to provide direct accountability to the board. There are a lot of reasons for it.

But I would admonish boards not to interfere with the process of the school. Optional programs go through a lot of process traumas. Sometimes they are in unusual places, in terms of what they look like at any given moment. I think the board, given the nature of the school, should wait until the evaluation material is there to deal with the issues. I believe accountability ought to be very serious and very well structured. But it ought to be annual. The board ought to be a supportive observer. Take something like tidiness, or instructional practices. You ought to give the alternative program a wide berth. But then, hold them very accountable, come funding time. Every program that a board is funding needs to be looked at with great care.

WALDRIP: You evaluate constantly.

NSBA: What kinds of evaluation instruments do you use?

WALDRIP: We use teacher, parent, student surveys. We use standardized and criterion-referenced tests. We use attendance figures. We use vandalism figures. Explusion and suspension figures. We have thorough evaluation.

NSBA: What do you do with evaluation results?

WALDRIP: Make them public!

NSBA: Do you use them to revamp, revise, change programs?

WALDRIP: We haven't been into alternatives that long, really. We do use evaluation results to make corrections and improvements. That's what it's for. But at the same time, they serve as public records.

FANTINI: One of the ground rules is that the board of education says there has to be evaluation. It can't be standardized tests because standardized tests measure standardized ways of doing things. When you have variation, you can't go that route.

Every alternative has to come up with a valid way of evaluating itself. For example, if you're an artist nobody is going to give you a standardized test to determine whether you are an artist. They look at your portfolio. There are one-on-one tests for students, rather than group tests. There are various ways of handling this.

The point is that at some point we have to have some assessment of progress or competencies. We want to see how well the child is developing talents, how well every learner is learning the roles he has to perform as an adult, like the role of a citizen, the role of a consumer. We have to have some evidence of that. We have to have some evidence of the perception the learner has of himself, self worth. All these have to be, and I don't care if it's traditional education or school without walls, it has to go on there. But the evaluations need not be uniform across the board. There are a lot of people working on different kinds of tests.

In evaluation, I would include satisfaction, satisfaction of parents, students, and teachers—consumer satisfaction. There are those who feel that of all the factors that we have in evaluation, satisfaction is the most important.

We're not in any agreement in the whole field of assessment. That's why I'm hopeful that we could diversify here. But the important ground rule is that there must be evaluation.

NSBA: What should be done with what is learned through evaluation?

FANTINI: Alternatives have a governance structure associated with them. It will get the feedback and say, well, we're weak in these areas. We need to beef these up. It's the same way it is now.

For example, if basic skills are low, we may need to buttress the training of tutors.

Evaluation serves two purposes. One is that it gives everyone a sense of where we're going together. Second, it tells what areas need to be bolstered.

I know of *no* system in which everybody is perfect. Therefore, you don't go around expecting that at the end of a year it's going to do 100% on everything, no matter what the alternative. But you do have a mechanism for improvement.

Keep in mind that the parents and others have to express satisfaction. If they are dissatisfied, then you have to look at other options. If there aren't any, then can you create one?

"The time to start planning evaluation is when you start planning the school." Smith

---

NSBA: What kinds of evaluation instruments should a school district use?

SMITH: I don't know that we have that much choice. In most communities the alternative schools are going to have to be evaluated the same way the conventional schools are. In other words, if you're giving reading tests in the conventional schools, I think it's safe to say that you had better plan on giving reading tests in the alternative schools.

Staff in alternative schools always report evaluation as their biggest single problem. *Usually* that is because they didn't consider it early enough. The time to start planning evaluation is when you start planning the school. Many times we find that the staff is well into the school year and all of a sudden somebody says you have to have an evaluation turned in by such-and-such a date. If you don't want to use the reading test that is being used in other schools, then even before the school opens you ought to propose an alternative to that and tell people what you are going to use to test reading in your school.

Right now the picture is that alternative schools are being evaluated more comprehensively than conventional schools. Typically they are using the tests that conventional schools use and they are using other things because they have a broader range of objectives. If an alternative school has an objective to raise the kids' self concepts, then they have to figure out whether they are raising the kids' self concepts. So they have to develop ways to measure that.

We are assuming here that the school does have objectives. Practically all public alternative schools do have rather comprehensive objectives. If a school didn't have objectives, then it would be difficult for them to decide how they were going to evaluate what it was they didn't know they were doing! All the schools I know do have objectives and most of them are evaluating according to those objectives.

NSBA: What do you do with evaluation results?

SMITH: My feeling is that alternative schools should have low exposure. Whether they are good or bad, it makes a more trying start if you've got constant exposure within the community to the mass media and to visitors from outside. Many of the alternative schools are suffering through all those things. I think you share evaluation results with the staff. But I don't think you share them with the mass media unless you have to, or unless the school district has a policy that you do.

You look bad either way. If the alternative program has higher test results than the rest of the schools, the other schools will immediately have a reason for that. The alternative school has more money or the best kids or something. If they have lower results, then everybody says, "Well, you know they never should have opened that in the first place."

I would say that as part of the total public and professional relations you want to keep a fairly low profile during the beginning stages, which would certainly include the first two years. It's better not to take a rather flamboyant report to the board saying that everybody in your school is reading two years better than the kids in the conventional school or something like that.

"A lot of people . . . have assumed that any publicity is good publicity. I think that's not true." Smith

NSBA: Should evaluation results be used to renovate programs, make changes?

SMITH: I'd use them for program analysis and use them for external purposes only when forced to. After the school is established, if it has something really tremendous, it ought to share that For example, if you really have solved the reading problem and everybody in your school is reading two years ahead, then I think you ought to figure out why that is and share that with people. But not in a way that would make everybody else mad.

It's a very touchy thing. A lot of people who have gone into alternative schools have assumed that any publicity is good publicity. I think that's not true. You see, any school has problems. As soon as you get the media looking at your school, then the media can make a little problem look like a huge problem. It can really backfire on you. John Goodlad wrote that we shouldn't be testing new schools, we should be nurturing them. A new school is a very tenuous operation. Nurturing and care is what it needs.

NSBA: When and how should evaluation be worked into an alternative?

ZANDER: It has to be there, and it has to be continuous. The biggest consideration as far as evaluation is concerned is that the program itself says how it wants to be evaluated. How does that program propose that it be measured about whether or not it is reaching its goals? You set those goals at the outset. You're able to change them, but for openers you have to decide what it is you are going to try to accomplish, and how you propose to know whether or not you are accomplishing that.

This is not done by the district laying something down on people, saying everybody will read at a fourth-grade level by the time he is nine years old. This is done by a program saying what its goals are; for example, children will be able to communicate, use language effectively, whatever the program wants to say. That's what they ought to be accountable for. That helps a person make a decision about what kind of program he or she wants to be in.

At Pratt we place a high emphasis on kids being able to get along with one another. The way we measure that is by looking at how kids felt at one point and how they felt at another point—how they were getting along with other people.

"You use standardized test results in some kind of perspective." Zander

NSBA: What about using standardized tests to measure?

ZANDER: Standardized test scores are base line information that you use. You use them as well as homemade instruments, as well as a range of evaluative techniques.

You use standardized test results in some kind of perspective. Here is where the kids are. This is how much they know. This is what a standardized test is useful for. But it is not a measuring stick in the sense that you decide what a student has to do to raise the score so much. You use it to see where kids are and where they are at some other time. What that does is help you decide what other kinds of information you need to reach your goals.

NSBA: What do you do with evaluation results? How do you use them?

ZANDER: The most recent thing we have done at Pratt has been used to decide some things about our math program. We have a parent opinion survey about the math program, another instrument asking staff how they feel about how we're doing, and another one for students. We gather all that material together, and then we look at what the results are, the test scores, how the children are doing. Then we ask what do we need to do to this math program, in response to the information we have here. We may find that

kids are feeling really good about math, that they're liking it. If we said that was the main thing we were trying to do this year, then we are not going to pay as much attention to the test scores in that situation.

What tends to happen, of course, is that if kids are feeling good about math, the test scores reflect that. And, when we have some negative things happening, it is going to be reflected in the test scores also. So you say the best educational decision for us to make, based on this, is that in addition to the individualized program we need to use more group instruction, and so forth.

NSBA: So you use evaluation results to improve program.

ZANDER: That's right.

NSBA: How do you feel about using that kind of material as public relations tools? To get more people to come to your school, or to get more money—uses outside the school?

ZANDER: I think it's inappropriate. The reason you do evaluation is to make good decisions for the kids who are going to the school. You use it to make the best possible program that you can for them. It is not used as a basis for comparison with other schools. I think you publish the information, but not from the standpoint of "look what we've got." You use it as a *process* for delivering what the kids need in the way of skills.

NSBA: There is a difference of opinion on this subject.

ZANDER: I'm sure there is. People would like to say this particular program teaches kids to do this at this particular age. That's pretty difficult to square with the idea of kids learning at different rates. The information that we are getting out of Southeast is that kids in different schools are at different places at different times. It kind of evens out by the time they're at the upper elementary ages. In a sense this endorses the idea that things should be different; the outcomes might well be the same.

GLINES: You begin to evaluate right away, because you need to set some agreed-upon goals and characteristics. That's not too hard to do. Why are we trying to do this program? What are we trying to accomplish? From the start you are evaluating in terms of why do we have to have it in the first place. Once you get started on it and you're trying to find out if it's working, are we doing what we said we were going to do, what you have to do is evaluate it based upon the agreed-upon goals of the program when it started. The board accepts program A, and the goals and characteristics have been spelled out. You can't turn around and evaluate them on conventional SATs or something.

Conventional programs have made all kinds of mistakes in evaluation, because they have only really evaluated reading and math. And those tests are invalid in the first place. They aren't based upon all the teaching that is going on in the schools. They immediately relegate half the students to being dummies. So I just refuse to give those kinds of tests in schools where I am. Alternative schools, as far as I'm concerned, shouldn't be doing those. That doesn't mean we don't know where the kids are at.

What needs to be done is what we call total evaluation. It goes into three parts. Number one, we evaluate the affective domain. That's crucial for all kids. Traditional schools haven't evaluated the affective area. You get into things like decision making, responsibility, valuing, authority, self-image, relationships, learning to learn. How much responsibility did a student bring to us in September, how much did he leave with in June? You have to find out how you are doing in these areas.

"Good alternative schools are doing more evaluation than the traditional schools." Glines

---

NSBA: Is this assessment done by teacher observation or what?

GLINES: Yes. Teacher observation and recording, interviews with students, parent responses.

And then, there has been quite a little work done

now in evaluating affective education. Albert Wright, who is now with the Montana State Department of Education, in charge of their planning and evaluation section, has written two booklets on how to evaluate in the affective domain. And so we're getting some information now on how to do it. By using these techniques and surveys, observations, interviewing, you can come up with a pretty good handle as to what's happening to the kids.

The second area has to be the psychomotor development, gross motor and fine motor control. We know that the most important subject in kindergarten is physical education, followed closely by industrial arts, home economics and music. A lot of times kids shouldn't be into reading at all in the first grade because of their psychomotor development. The third part of total evaluation is the cognitive area. If it's very important for the student to know x, y, or z, test him on it.

Good alternative schools are doing more evaluation than the traditional schools. The last year I was at Wilson, we had 34 masters theses done on our school.

NSBA: So you went out and solicited evaluation studies?

GLINES: Right. The good alternative school welcomes evaluation. Most alternative schools have more results and know what's happening to their kids more than the conventional schools.

How are staff selected and trained?

NSBA: Staffing can present unusual problems with a non-conventional program. Where are staff found? What should one look for in a teacher? What special training should teachers have?

FANTINI: Walk in any school. You know that any teacher has developed a style of teaching. Some are very directive; some are non-directive. There are certain children who need directive teaching and who profit from it. Others need non-directive. For a teacher just to go into a room, close the door, and impose a non-directive approach, may work with half the class and not work with the other half. Since the school system views itself as being uniform, it doesn't recognize the fact that teachers are different, and doesn't make use of their different styles. Better to explain to the parents how each teacher teaches, and on the basis of conferences, try to seek a more fruitful match.

You help teachers move toward a style, if they want to, that is much more in demand. But you don't write a teacher off. This is a humane situation. I want teachers to have opportunities to learn different approaches. As we become sophisticated in training, teachers can learn multiple styles. If nobody selects a certain teacher, you don't say get out; support development programs.

"Within most school systems there are teachers who want to try an alternative." Smith

SMITH: Within most school systems there are teachers who want to try an alternative. You usually find them as soon as you ask for them. In many communities it seems to be teachers who start the thing. Teachers are usually more amenable than other populations in the community.

NSBA: What about inservice training? How do you help the teacher who thinks he or she would like to get into an alternative school but doesn't know how to operate in a different kind of learning environment?

SMITH: A lot of training takes place in the planning process. Time for planning and staff development is even more crucial when opening a new alternative school than it is when opening a conventional school. You have to assume in most cases that this is not something staff members have been prepared for in college or someplace else. There are so many things about opening a school and establishing an atmosphere that people aren't prepared for because they don't realize they are part of operating a school.

The best example of what *not* to do is in the cases where boards of education were sold the concept of architecturally open schools. Then they turned around and assigned faculty to them. They then assumed that teachers would move into that open space and teach differently, or at least make use of the open space. What happened in many cases was that the teachers moved in and ordered bookcases, so they could get walled off from the next space.

You are dealing with the same thing when you open alternative schools. But it is not as obvious. The way to get the inservice, I think, is by allowing adequate time for planning and staff development. This means that the staff should be identified early, should have opportunities to get together. We may be talking about summer

workshops; we may be talking about sending members of the prospective staff to conferences or sending them off to visit other similar schools.

The other part of training is formal teacher training. While we are considering alternative schools, we ought to be considering alternative ways to prepare teachers. In almost any community one can make arrangements with teacher training institutions to have internships and other field experiences in the alternative schools. Through student teachers and interns, one can turn around and recruit faculty. So, say you were going to double the Cincinnati Center for Performing Arts; you would staff the second center with part of the experienced faculty and some interns and student teachers from the first faculty.

The important thing here is not to talk about any kind of single program, but to talk about *time* for planning and staff development before the school opens, and new alternatives to the preparation and inservice for teachers that would be appropriate to the alternate schools.

Now, of course, many alternative schools are relating teacher centers to the alternative schools. That's what they do in Minneapolis.

NSBA: Staffing can present some problems in a non-conventional program. You have said that in Cincinnati staffing an alternative program is a voluntary thing. Do you have any trouble finding enough staff?

WALDRIP: No. They apply. We have more applicants for the alternatives than we can place. This can pose a problem too. People who don't get in sometimes become critical of the program. We had some problems with some very special teachers, like dance teachers, and foreign language teachers. We actually went to Germany for teachers for our bilingual program. We didn't have any trouble getting them because we knew where to go. They were American citizens teaching in Germany.

NSBA: Have you had special inservice training for teachers in alternative programs?

WALDRIP: Yes, but it is a different program for each alternative. We have some summer activities, but mostly we use released time throughout the year. The principals and their teachers design their inservice programs.

"Teacher choice is just as important as student choice." Zander

---

ZANDER: Teacher choice is just as important as student choice. There is no question about it. Teachers teach in different ways and that needs to be acknowledged, supported. In some cases that will mean some people need to learn different ways. Some people are willing to do that, and some people are not so willing. Work with the people who are willing to change.

At Marcy School, in Southeast, for instance, all of the teachers who were at that school before it became an open school elected to get themselves enough renewal and enough staff development and experience to be able to be open school teachers. That is crucial. Anybody who doesn't want to do that can and should opt out.

Some people have a nagging feeling as a teacher that I would be doing better if I were doing some other things, but I don't know how to do them and I haven't had any experience with them; but I'm willing. I want to learn and give that a try. Those are the people who can easily make the switch.

NSBA: Do the staff at each school decide among themselves how they will use inservice money?

ZANDER: Yes, they should have that option. If you feel that the very best thing you could do is look at other open school programs, then you spend your staff development money getting people out to see things. If you have decided that the best thing to do is to rewrite your curriculum so that it is individualized, then that is how you spend your staff development money.

"Teachers don't want to be someplace where they are not going to do well." Zander

---

NSBA: What happens when you have staff vacancies?

ZANDER: You look for people who *want* to come. Even in a time of shrinking teacher market, teachers don't want to be someplace where they are not going to do well. That is a powerful thing. As teachers come to look at a vacancy, you describe the program and what expectations are. There are people who will say that is something I would really like to do. Or, they *will* say I'm going to have to look a little further. Your program is not where I am, nor where I want to go.

NSBA: In your alternatives, do you try to find teachers who are experienced with that particular kind of program?

ZANDER: If not experience, somebody who is willing to learn how to do it. That is very important.

MULCAHY: The first thing you do is advertise that you are going to be doing a certain kind of thing. People will identify themselves. You have so many people in the classroom teaching in a traditional mode who would prefer to be teaching in an optional mode. Those people identify themselves.

Let me tell you a really interesting story. They started an optional school in Racine, Wisconsin. The median age of a teacher up in that school is probably fifty-five. These people had been teaching their hearts out for the last thirty years, and when they heard about this school, they thought they had died and gone to heaven. They had been the stalwarts in their schools. They had been standing against repression, for creative teaching and all that, for thirty years. They had been holding many schools together, just waiting for their chance. All these older people came by and took the jobs, since they were offered on the basis of seniority. The teachers in the other schools were shocked. When the most beloved teachers in the schools, the ones the kids always used to come back and visit, when those teachers had a chance to get out, they *did*. They've got two young fellows who are co-directors, and the staff itself is much older. There usually is no real problem in finding willing staff.

"There is a whole range of problems and issues that are new to a teacher." Mulcahy

NSBA: Is inservice different for alternative school staffs?

MUCAHY: The issues are often very different. One of the things that happens is that options tend to be smaller schools. There is a whole range of problems and issues that are new to a teacher.

I do a lot of alternative school staff inservice in this country and in Canada. They are interested in organizational issues. How can we help organize our school to meet the needs of kids better? Now that's a question a traditional teacher would never raise because the school is all organized.

You have to reinvent the wheel as an alternative school teacher. You have to go back and question why you are doing things the way you are.

One of the dangers, by the way, is that some of the younger, more bushy-tailed teachers too readily reject the traditional solutions to things. They don't see those solutions as having evolved through a whole lot of trial and error. They'll say the old school gave tests, or the old school took attendance, so we won't do those things.

GLINES: If at all possible, you start with the volunteers. There is always 30 percent of the staff who don't need any retraining. They just need a lot of support and new ideas and suggestions. They're ready. The train each other. They're creative, they're excited about doing it, they figure out their own evaluation systems and record keeping systems and so forth.

Then there is a second group who are ready, but want some help. You do workshops for them on things like how to individualize instruction, how to develop a non-scheduled school, how to do away with report cards and still evaluate kids. You give them some help.

Then there is 30 percent who aren't going to budge. You don't make them go into a new thing. Let

them have their alternative. If you have to force them into some major change, about the best you can do is just give them all the philosophy you can. Give them what help you can with the mechanics and then be ready to grin and bear it. The first year or two, they're going to fight you all the way through. They're going to do it, but not do it. They're going to find all kinds of reasons it isn't working. What we've found over time is that those who are good teachers in the long run will begin to see the possibilities and work with the others.

NSBA: If you get vacancies in a non-conventional program, do you try to fill your staff positions with people who are experienced in that type of learning environment?

GLINES: A lot of people are getting training. For example, the University of Massachusetts and Mankato State University—where I was—they have alternative teacher ed programs. Indiana University has a program. So, for administrators who are looking for some people with experience and training, they can look to those kinds of colleges.

Every year at Wilson, we would turn out thirty or forty teachers. That's quite a supply of masters interns. Another source is to tap the existing schools. See if you can steal some of them. You almost have to pirate staff to get started, because you don't want to start with nobody knowing anything. You shouldn't have to reinvent the wheel.

There are enough alternative programs around the country, so that for the district that really wants to move in this direction, there are enough people with training and/or desire that you don't have to hire anybody who is anti anymore. There are enough people who have the spirit.

Are there alternatives to failure?

NSBA: What happens after a program has been running for a while? Do alternatives have a life cycle? Why do some fail? Should an alternative program change or be left to die if it no longer meets needs?

SMITH: There isn't any failure rate for alternative public schools. Figures that you read are based on non-public schools.

"The survival of a school will be most tenuous if they rely at the outset on external funds in their regular operation. . . ." Smith

---

The survival of a school will be most tenuous if it relies at the outset on external funds in its regular operation or if the school is put in by somebody *for* somebody else. In other words, if a board member thinks there ought to be an alternative school and then they go ahead and install that without knowing if it's needed or if there is any support for it in the community, rest assured it probably won't last.

What we are seeing a little bit now is the second generation alternative. People who go to an alternative say, "We don't like this. This isn't what we wanted." So they ask for another alternative. You have an alternative to the alternative, a second generation alternative. I think that is very healthy.

If you want to call it a movement, we're talking about something that is only six to seven years old. It almost all started with Parkway (in Philadelphia), as far as the movement goes. So I don't think we can really predict yet whether any of the alternatives that are around today are going to become lasting aspects of American education, or whether we are going to have all kinds of alternatives to the alternatives. What I think we can predict safely is that we will have a much broader array of alternatives within school systems. I think that everybody has concluded that there has to be some choice. I think we just have to assume that we are going to have a lot more alternatives in public education than we ever had before.

NSBA: Do alternatives have life cycles? Should programs change if they no longer seem to be meeting needs?

WALDRIP: Well, that depends upon how far off the line a program is. We haven't experienced this. We've had some problems with some of our programs getting adequate registration. But in most cases we have more students and teachers than we can accept. We have one elementary college prep program that is in a school that we cannot get whites to go to in any large numbers. And it's a very beautiful school. But the area has had an image that it can't live down. That's the only school, though. We have four of these; the other three are filled.

And then we have our Academy of Math and Science. It has not pulled the way we thought it would. We just thought it would be filled, but it isn't. It was very high ranking among our count in the survey. In fact it was the highest ranking. But we have a difficult time getting kids to go to it. We thought initially it was because of the location. We have moved it for next year; it hasn't picked up much. Very strange. I knew the bilinguals would go. I knew that citywide would go. I knew that the Creative and Performing Arts would go. If you can name a school

something that describes it, almost immediately you know it's going to go. Math and Science should. But it's the only exception to that in the entire city. We're not giving up. It's going to work. It's just been in existence one year.

"I think one of the wonderful things about alternative schools is that they can be gotten rid of when they cease to be functional." Mulcahy

NSBA: Should alternatives change or go out of business if they no longer meet needs?

MULCAHY: Yes. I think one of the wonderful things about alternative schools is that they can be gotten rid of when they cease to be functional.

NSBA: How do you know when a school is no longer functional?

MULCAHY: When you have to put on a big recruiting drive to get enough students. When the school falls apart. When it ceases meeting the goals that it established. When there is no energy and people no longer care about learning in the school. Then call it quits or radically alter it. If they want to go off in a different direction, that's OK too. A small alternative program can keep up with changes in kids, and if it doesn't, get rid of it.

I think it is tragic that we can't close some of our large comprehensive schools that have been dead for years and start over again. We have that option with alternative schools. We can close them and forget them or start them again. One that has done this is in Ithaca; it closed and two years later was reborn, as a very different kind of school. Now they are very healthy and doing very well.

ZANDER: The alternative programs which are lasting are the ones, in my view, that are evolving. If they figure they have come to the point where they have the answers, and have reached the ultimate organization, they're in trouble.

There is very much a process involved in alternatives. The process is continuing to make good decisions about what ought to be happening for kids as you are working with them. Involve a lot of people in that process. When you stop doing that, I think you have killed off the idea of change being a process.

". . . if an alternative is built on the charisma of one or two people, and those people go away, then the program is most likely to burn out." Zander

There needs to be some kind of advisory group that is functioning all the time. To assist in evaluations or to help describe what the program is going to be. I don't know of any alternatives that have phased themselves out of existence. But I think that if an alternative is built on the charisma of one or two people, and those people go away, then the program is most likely to burn out. If there hasn't been a process built there, it will probably die; I think there is a life cycle in that sense. Somehow, you have to get into a constantly evolving thing.

NSBA: How do you keep communication going?

ZANDER: We use a mechanism called the Wednesday envelope, which is sent to parents weekly. That really seems to work well as a communication device. We have a lot of people who are informed; we have a lot of people who come in, because they know what's going on.

NSBA: Do all interested parties ever physically get together in this effort to communicate?

ZANDER: I don't think we have ever had anything that was exciting enough to get everybody out for a single event. We do a fair job of reaching everybody over time. The Wednesday envelope gets something out to all people once a week. Everybody doesn't always respond, but at least the information is out there. What we are doing a better job of is broadening the base of people who do participate. It is not just a few people. There is a wide range of people participating in different ways- some on the advisory council, some helping teachers, teaching interest groups,

some getting community resources. This is a very wide spectrum, which is broadening. I don't think we'll every get everybody, but we are healthy.

GLINES: I think two things have happened. Many districts have never really accepted the total philosophy. They say, "Well, start it and we'll see how it works out." When the principal of an alternative school is transferred or leaves, the new principal comes in and hasn't bought the concept. And then right away he begins to slow down the program. Then the staff begins to get robbed or go back to school. A few teachers move and are replaced by teachers who don't understand the complete spirit of it. And then parents change. The kids of the parents who supported it have gone on to higher grades. So you have different kinds of parents.

What we forget to do is ongoing education. The parents, teachers and students need ongoing education about the alternative. The first year or two you really go all out to convince everybody. Over a period of two or three years staff and parents and kids change to the extent that many of the originals aren't there.

You need ongoing explanation. You see, once the board members have committed themselves to that win-win philosophy, then they must make sure that whoever is in a school is committed to that philosophy. A problem area is when a couple of board members get defeated and the superintendent gets fired or quits; then it isn't too hard, over a three or four year period, to have the initiators just phase out. It's dependent on that new board and superintendent to have that win-win spirit, rather than go back to win-lose.

If you have win-lose leaders, you can be sure every time it's going to go back to the old. If you maintain win-win leaders, you can be sure it's going to continue. That's the whole key.

There is another reason for many alternatives dying out. You see, most so-called alternatives right now aren't very different. The rooms might be arranged differently, or they got rid of desks, but when you come down to it, most of the alternative schools still give report cards. Most of the kids are still taking algebra because they've got some idea they have to go to college. They still have to have four credits in English to graduate. What have they really changed? So many of the alternative schools that have died out have not really made significant change. They've made mechanical changes and *some* philosophical changes. But it all hasn't tied into being significant to the extent that the alternative continues.

"The fourth year you start talking about how you can revise what you've got." Glines

---

When you start a program there is a cycle you go through. The first year is utter chaos. The board and the community just have to accept that. You avoid it as much as you can. But you don't anticipate that everything is going to be perfect and then wipe it out after the first year if it's not.

The second year is what we call the frustration year. You expect everything to go well. The idea is that you have been in it a year and you ought to have the answers. But you find that the second year you spend most of your time trying to correct the mistakes of the first year.

We call the third year the stability year. Now you are at a point where the teachers are really tired. What you do the third year is let them kind of rest. If you've been successful the first two years, you're in pretty good shape for the third year. You let the program roll without too many changes.

The fourth year you start talking about how you can revise what you've got. By the end of the fifth year, if you haven't made major overhauls, then it's not going to last, because it becomes institutionalized then. The people start thinking they have arrived, they're IT. And the faculty becomes stagnant. They start defending what they have done. Then you've got another status quo, another traditional school.

You really have to build in an ongoing change format. That's one reason I'm going back to visit Wilson, to bug my teachers. Since I left they have made some changes, but by and large, the

program is too much like it was when I left. I told them when I left that it was time to tear the thing apart.

Society is changing dramatically. Education is going to have to change to keep up with it. The alternatives that you're writing about now, that are going on in the Quincys, the Wilson schools, the St. Paul schools, Grand Rapids, Louisville and so forth—all those programs are obsolete. They really are. Every one of them is obsolete. They are beyond what most conventional schools are still doing. At this moment in time, they are helping kids. But they're obsolete in terms of where we must go. We need a whole new approach to the alternative movement. I see people trying to hang on to what we've got now and trying to defend it. That's not what we need and if that continues, the alternative movement is not going to make it.

What do the experts say about getting started?

NSBA: For a school board interested in pursuing the prospect of options, what would you suggest they do?

MULCAHY: Fantini's book, *Public Schools of Choice*, is probably the best thing they can get. There are three centers that have information and could be contracted with for assistance, I would suspect: the National Alternative Schools Program, at the University of Massachusetts; the International Consortium for Options in Public Education, at Indiana University; and the Center for New Schools, in Chicago. These institutions have directories of alternatives, listed by state. So what you should do is read the descriptions on those and call, because some schools welcome visitors while others don't.

People who want to start alternative schools are practically universally welcome. The people who are not welcome are usually the ones who are writing research papers.

"Board members and administrators are generally very good guests. . . ." Mulcahy

Shanti had whole bunches of people going through it all the time. We had a lot of board members and administrators come through. Board members and administrators are generally very good guests because they have a sense of education to begin with and always have a lot of questions. They don't have to be shown where everything is. They have an energy and an interest anyway. And that's the way to visit a school.

Come prepared with a fairly structured outline of what you want to know. Then just ask everybody. That's a good way to visit, rather than to encourage the school to put on a little horse and pony show. Board members probably know about canned performances that really don't reflect what they want to know. That is less beneficial in terms of collecting information. It's better when you make an appointment to speak to students, teachers and administrators. Take time. Take a day or a half day to do it. Ask to speak with the different constituencies of people. If you want technical information, you should warn people so they will have it there. Generally, schools are willing to share their philosophies and programs.

"A small group can get it off the ground and make it grow. . . ." Glines

GLINES: If the board members will understand the idea of win-win instead of win-lose, if they adopt a general basic policy and the philosophy that they do believe in options and alternatives, this gets at the heart of the thing. They have to say they are going to provide options; it's not a matter of either/or. There is going to be automatic approval, if you bring to the board a sensible looking program that doesn't cost a million dollars. There can't be a question of whether it will be approved or not.

With that kind of philosophy on the part of the board, it isn't too difficult to get a program together. The way to get a program together is to

find an interested principal in the district, somebody who wants to start it. He knows some teachers who want to start. And they know some parents who want to start. That group gets together, sits down and starts the procedure of writing a proposal. They're willing to do it, they're enthusiastic about it. A small group can get it off the ground and make it grow, because it has already been accepted in the district that there are going to be lots of ideas and options.

If you have a situation where the board hasn't adopted win-win, where the community is battling and bickering all the time, then what you have to do, unfortunately, is more complicated. You can't do it alone. Individuals haven't made it.

You have to get a group large enough to have enough weight to accomplish what it wants to do. For example, if you want to get 300 kids into some alternative program from a high school of 2,100 kids, then you have to have enough teachers, parents and students to make up the program. Then that group of parents, students and teachers has to hold coffees, parent meetings, behind-the-scenes meetings, cocktail parties and all the political shenanigans. You have to go through all that stuff, hoping that you can finally get it accepted. But you have to fight all the way when you do this, because some teachers are threatened and some parents and administrators feel threatened. School board members start listening to all the phone calls from the anti parents. There are only about 20 percent of the people who actually violently oppose any of this stuff. But they get so riled up and call the board so much, that the board starts backing off, without taking time to analyze that the critics are a minority. They should *listen* to the minority, understand and make sure that they have their alternative. But they should still move ahead with the alternatives for the others, because they need it too.

Parents can get hold of a lot of good books on alternatives and get ideas. If they have a chance, they should visit some current alternative programs. You try to get all the help you can. But there are certain things you're going to have to do, almost on your own.

"The best thing to do is visit." Zander

ZANDER: The best thing to do is visit. Board members really need to get out and talk to board members of districts where things are being developed. People need to see it in operation, to talk to some people whom they can believe about the problems, the successes and the failures. This is the single most effective method. It should be the initial effort on the part of any board member. And if one board member is interested, he or she ought to try to shag a couple of more who may be teetering or don't know anything about alternatives, as the most likely people to go along. Make some kind of team visit. Seven of us from Minneapolis just came back from Winnipeg. We did two days of workshops with teachers. That was a board effort. Seven of the nine board members from Winnipeg had been to our project. They were really sold on the concept.

The impetus has come, very largely, from boards. I happen to feel that is a pretty direct way of getting alternatives. If board members are interested, it is very likely some important things will follow in rapid order. Visiting, talking with other people who may be interested, finding out where teachers are, where administrators are, where the community is on the subject, is important. Then, prepare the case. This involves reading, research, and everything you can manage in order to start shaping what it is you think you would like to try to do.

"I'd call in somebody who has had some experience." Waldrip

NSBA: What would you suggest to a board member or an administrator in a community that wants to pursue alternative programs? What should they do to learn about them and get them started?

WALDRIP: Of course, Fantini's book, *Public Schools of Choice*, is a good primer.

I'd call in somebody who has had some

experience. On a consulting basis. Hire somebody starting in about March, maybe April, until the following August.

Have the consultant work with the staff and the board and parents in three areas: program design or curriculum; staff development; program marketing and student recruitment. Give the consultant the responsibility for getting the job done. He can do it on a consultant basis, if he has somebody to work with. He can get it lined up, get it going, get the advertising out, get the application blanks out, have the community meetings that are necessary, make certain of the support of the principals and teachers, be sure they feel a commitment to help recruit.

When all that happens, you make it. But you have to know what you're going to do the first day. You can't call something an alternative and then have it be the same thing people left. It has to be a *real* alternative. It has to be a unique kind of program that's immediately recognizable as being different. Or else people are going to say, "It's the same old thing. You weren't truthful with us." As well they should.

FANTINI: You need a triggering device. A triggering device that is legitimate. A group representative of administrators, teachers and other groups in the community could set up a task force to review alternative education and make a report to everyone on it. They could do a little bit of that, then when they are far enough along, they could initiate a conference, invite some people in to speak to the entire educational community and parents about what alternatives are about. They could take trips to visit other districts. They could send for all kinds of information.

Many school systems have written about their programs. Accreditation agencies have done reviews and have come out with ways of approving non-traditional education. North Central has done this. I have this in the book I just put together, *A Sourcebook for Parents, Teachers, and Administrators.* There are evaluations that have been done by Rand Corporation, Quincy, Illinois schools and Title III, which has supported many alternatives, as well as by others. I would certainly do homework. That's number one.

"The board of education should be asking a whole series of questions." Fantini

NSBA: You would suggest interested parties actually dig through the available printed material?

FANTINI: Yes. They should get reports. The board of education should be asking a whole series of questions. What are alternatives? Do we have any examples of where they have worked? How do we get it started? How do we evaluate them? All these questions have to be addressed.

If, after a while, it seems sensible to go ahead, you are ready to take your next step, but I certainly would not do this without the parties of interest coming together.

The school board are the ones who are accountable and they're the ones who have to make sure, in fairness to the community, that they have thought this thing through. Then give emphasis to a conference or a series of discussions, or to using the media or cable television to discuss alternatives. Invite people in, or a consultant in.

There are a whole series of ways of doing it. There are films on alternatives now. There are all kinds of things people have access to. I would say, number one, don't jump on it just because someone says alternatives. It depends on what version you are talking about.

But I certainly would give it priority right now, because if we don't diversify, then we're going to run into the politics of education. The kind of politics that is divisive. Not a politics of cooperation, but a politics of collision. I've been warning, as I go around the country, that alternative education is the constructive, sensible approach. It's a very conservative idea, incidentally, because it talks about individual choice; it talks about options for people, decentralized programs. Why should the private schools be the only ones who are diverse?

Unless the board of education is comfortable with it, then they can't set up enabling policies

to let it happen. If they don't let it happen, then I think they are going to have a lot of dissatisfied customers who are then going to try to elect people to reflect their point of view. Then you have a divided board, then you fire the superintendent, then you bring another one in and pretty soon the whole thing is a mess.

It seems to me there is an urgency about this. We don't have an infinite amount of time to reform a major institution like the schools. If school boards are not tuned into this, they are going to find themselves very vulnerable, having to deal with political pressures. It's too late when it gets to that.

Resources

The reader may be interested in pursuing further information about alternative schools. This resource section is not an exhaustive bibliography, nor a review of the literature on alternatives. It lists and describes several institutions, books, pamphlets and other materials which should be helpful for those who are anxious to learn more about options in public education.

Books—General works dealing with alternatives in the broad sense.

Alternative Education: A Sourcebook for Parents, Teachers, Students and Administrators. By Mario D. Fantini. This book is a worthwhile guide for anyone interested in options in public schools. Published by Doubleday, Anchor Press, 1976.

Alternatives in Education: Schools and Programs. By Allan A. Glatthorn, 1975, Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc. This book, as the author states, is not concerned with the politics, history or theory of alternatives. It presents suggestions for planning curriculum, staffing, facilities and evaluation for all types of alternative schools and programs.

The Conventional and the Alternative in Education. By John I. Goodlad *et al*, 1975, McCutchan Publishing Corporation. A scholarly discussion of perspectives toward and prospects for alternative educational programs. Six contributing authors.

Educational Innovation: Alternatives in Curriculum and Instruction. Arthur D. Roberts, ed., 1975, Allyn and Bacon, Inc. Twenty-five writers contribute to this volume, which is divided into three parts. Part one looks at half a dozen reforms such as Montessori and the Philadelphia experience and includes suggestions for implementing these changes. Part two addresses specific curriculum alternatives in English, social studies, mathematics, science, reading, etc. Part three emphasizes materials and staff development, e.g., differentiated staffing, creating simulation games, instructional uses of junk.

Public Schools of Choice: A Plan for the Reform of American Education. By Mario D. Fantini, 1973, Simon and Schuster. Many people consider this the best introduction to the topic of alternatives in public education systems.

Teaching and Administering the High School Alternative Education Program. By Fred B. Chernow and Harold Genkin, 1975, Parker Publishing Company, Inc. This is a rather didactic textbook, with lists of "must do's," but valuable in that it discusses many nitty-gritty topics absent from other books: how to write a proposal for funding; how to assess furniture needs; what to think about when purchasing carrels; how to set up an admissions procedure and publicize your program; etc.

Books—Works which deal with specific types of alternatives, programs or particular schools.

Innovation Without Renovation in the Elementary School. By Richard J. Morton and Jane Morton, 1974, Citation Press, Library and Trade Division, Scholastic Magazines, Inc. This book is packed with practical suggestions for opening up a school building which was built for teacher-centered instruction in self-contained classrooms. The Mortons say "innovative programs can be put into effect in most schools with walls."

Then they tell the reader how to do it, in specific detail.

P.S. 2001: The Story of the Pasadena Alternative School. By Philip H. DeTurk, 1974, Phi Delta Kappa. This short volume gives a very personal readable account of the birth and life of a free school.

The Mini-School Experience: Restructuring Your School: A Handbook. By James J. Morisseau, November, 1975, New York Urban Coalition, Inc. This is the story of the Haaren experiment, a cooperative effort of the New York Urban Coalition and the New York City Board of Education. The book provides background, history and analysis of a unique mini-school program and includes a "cookbook" for people who want to develop their own mini-school approach in local public schools. The second part of the book is detailed and includes examples and exhibits of budgets, schedules, etc.

Booklets, pamphlets, papers—Shorter works about alternatives.

A Conservative Alternative School: The A+ School in Cupertino. By William Pursell, 1976, Fastback 67, PDK Educational Foundation. Booklet telling the story of the Academics Plus program in a California school district. This program is a highly structured one emphasizing basic subjects and enrichment areas.

Alternative Schools. A National School Public Relations Association publication, 1972. An overview of types of alternatives, evaluation and financing, with an extensive, though dated, section of references.

"An Organizational Explanation of the Failure of Alternative Schools." By E. D. Terrence, February, 1975, Stanford Center for Research and Development in Teaching. This research paper explores a three-stage developmental sequence for alternative schools.

Designing a Transportation System for a Parent Choice School District: A Transportation Supervisor's Handbook. Free from the National Institute of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare. The purpose of the book is to help plan transportation to make non-neighborhood schools accessible to all the students in a district.

Financing Public Alternative Schools. National Alternative Schools Program, University of Massachusetts. Discusses four topics: "Do Alternative Schools Cost More," "Why Invest in Alternative Schools," "Fiscal Planning in Alternative Schools," and "Alternative School Grantsmanship."

Matters of Choice: A Ford Foundation Report on Alternative Schools. Ford Foundation, Office of Reports, 1974. The Ford Foundation has spent millions assisting alternatives, and the report reviews what they have learned.

Optional Alternate Public Schools. By Vernon H. Smith, Daniel J. Burke, Robert D. Barr, 1974. Fastback 42, PDK Educational Foundation. Booklet describing types of alternative public schools, their impacts and problems.

"Policies and Standards for the Approval of Optional Schools and Special Function Schools." North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. This is what one accreditation agency expects in your alternative schools.

The Reform of Secondary Education. This is the report of the National Commission on the Reform of Secondary Education, which was established by the Charles F. Kettering Foundation in 1972. It set out to examine secondary education, describe it and indicate needed changes. The changes recommended by the Commission can be implemented by those involved in creating alternative schools.

This We Believe: Secondary Schools in a Changing Society. This is the report of the Task Force on Secondary Schools in a Changing Society, appointed by the Board of Directors of the National Association of Secondary School Principals. It presents the beliefs of the Association regarding how secondary schools can be improved, with focus upon the educational program.

Periodicals

Applesauce is self-described as "a blend of ideas and happenings in alternative education." It is published by the National Alternative Schools Program at the University of Massachusetts. A monthly paper available for $2.00 per year.

Changing Schools is published by the Center for Options in Public Education, Indiana University. It is an occasional newsletter on alternative public schools.

(Each of these organizations also publishes a directory of alternative schools, nationwide.)

Films and workshops

"Education by Choice," describes the development of Quincy High School into a public school of seven alternative programs. Many people who were involved in its creation discuss their experiences.

"O.T.O.—A Classroom Community," is a 29-minute film about the Opportunities to Teach Ourselves program at Andrew Warde High School in Fairfield, Connecticut. A visit with students and teachers involved in an alternative offering experiential learning.

(Both of these excellent films are distributed by MEDIA FIVE Film Distributors, 1911 North Cole Avenue, Hollywood, California 90038.)

Indiana University sponsors annual workshops on alternative schools. School of Education 339, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47401.

NSBA's School Board Academy and AASA's National Academy for School Executives periodically offer programs on alternative schools.

People and Places—These resources have people, ideas, experiences and materials which can be helpful.

Center for New Schools, 59 E. Van Buren, Chicago, Illinois 60605. CNS assists parents, students and educators interested in setting up alternative schools. Resources at their offices include the CBL Box, full of information on community-based learning. Their publications list includes titles such as: *Decision-Making in Alternative Secondary Schools, Planning for Change, Strengthening Alternative Schools.*

Indiana University is home of the International Consortium for Options in Public Education, a graduate program training teachers for work in alternative schools and the Center for Options in Education. School of Education 339, Bloomington, Indiana 47401.

The National Alternative Schools Project at the University of Massachusetts offers assistance to those interested in or involved with alternatives. Write for a publication list. Amherst, Massachusetts 01002.

The Texas Region IV Education Service Center is mapping plans for a clearinghouse on information for school districts interested in magnet schools. Joseph Strehle is the contact at the Center, 1740 Seamist, Houston, Texas 77008.

Appendix A

This is an example of an alternative schools policy, in effect in Jefferson County, Colorado. (From the files of the Educational Policies Service of the National School Boards Association, a subscription service.)

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

I. BASIC POLICY

It is the policy of the Jefferson County School District R-1 to provide suitable programs for all its students. Where programs and environments now in the system seem not to be meeting the needs of students and the goals of the District, alternative educational programs may be established.

II. DEFINITION

Alternative education is defined as a provision within the public education system which offers major choices among diverse educational environments based on student needs, talents and interests; which occupies a significant proportion of an individual student's time and meets District goals.

III. BUDGET

Optional or alternative programs shall be funded by and are accountable to the Jefferson County School District. Budget allocations for these alternative programs will be categorical. During the pilot phase of such programs they could receive funds in excess of regular staffing allocations such as small-school ratios but following the pilot would then operate within the regular school ratios. Unless expressly ratified by the Board of Education the alternative programs will not receive operational funds of any kind other than those allocated to all the regular programs.

IV. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The educational objectives of alternative education programs shall be congruent with the five basic goals of the Jefferson County Public Schools with the understanding that there can be some flexibility in interpretation of the methods used to achieve these goals.

V. ESTABLISHING ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

Teachers, administrators, parents, and students who wish to develop alternative forms of education to better serve identified pupil needs shall be encouraged to propose programs which may be chosen by the student and his parents. Groups who wish to make proposals shall be provided the necessary guidelines for developing their proposal and shall be informed of the necessary steps for seeking approval.

In order to insure that adequate planning can take place in the development or expansion of alternative programs each proposal requiring separate facilities or staff must be submitted on or before April 1 for inclusion in the proposed budget one year in advance of the date of implementation.

VI. MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION OF ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

A. The principal of an alternative school or of a school with an alternative program within-a-school shall in compliance with law and District policy be in full charge of the school or program, staff and facilities, and will be directly responsible to the Area Superintendent.

B. Alternative schools and programs shall have the interested citizens, teachers, students and administrators of the school or program form an advisory council to represent the views of the community served. Such advisory councils shall have all of the powers, duties, responsibilities and limitations of all other advisory councils in the R-1 School District.

C. Alternative schools and programs shall observe all the laws and policies that govern all of the schools and programs of the District unless specifically waived by the Board of Education.

D. The principal of an alternative school or program that has student and staff codes of behavior, dress and discipline must clearly articulate said codes and regulations to all potential staff, students and parents prior to their actual enrollment or employment in the school or program. Such regulatory codes must contain due process provisions as provided in the law.

E. Alternative schools and programs must make provisions in their procedural documents for free expression of views and there shall be no censorship of publications or communications except in accord with District-wide policy.

F. Alternative schools and programs desiring to impose sanctions for violation of the codes must clearly state said sanctions in the operational codes of the school or program, and notify all concerned parties in advance of the potential penalties. These sanctions shall not include the threat of returning a student to his/her home school.

VII. STUDENT SERVICES

A. Alternative schools and alternative programs within-a-school shall provide in accordance with District policy and the law the full range of health services, special education and pupil personnel services as they are provided for all other schools of the district.

B. Alternative schools and alternative programs within-a-school shall provide adequate transportation to students of any family desiring to enroll its children in the alternative school to insure that no family is deprived of the opportunity to take advantage of the program.

VIII. INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

The formal procedures for planning, developing and implementing instructional programs under the direction of the Division of Instructional Planning and Development and Division of Program Implementation, in cooperation with the staff conducting the alternative program involved, shall be followed to facilitate alternative programs receiving maximum support from the administration in delineating specific objectives in various curriculum subject areas, formulating plans for the accomplishment of such objectives and insuring that each alternative program meets prescribed District goals.

IX. SPECIAL VARIATIONS OF PROGRAM

A. Deviations from or exclusions of established District programs sought by an alternative school or program shall be expressed in writing and submitted by the principal through the Area Superintendent to the appropriate channels for program revision. The written request should include a rationale for the omission based on the needs and objectives of the alternative school. Where exclusions would limit the school's ability to achieve the District goals, special permission of the Board of Education will be required.

B. Those aspects of the alternative school curriculum which differ significantly from the curriculum of the regular schools of the District shall be expressed in writing and made available to all parents of pupils interested in these options before they are enrolled in the alternative program.

X. EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROJECTS

When alternative programs are in the process of implementation they will be reviewed annually for the first three years. A summary of the data and recommendations of staff will be submitted to the Superintendent on or before the final day of the academic year in which the evaluation takes place. The responsibility for developing the methodology for evaluation and the assignment and function of audit committees shall be conducted under the appropriate offices within the Division of Instructional Planning and Development and the Division of Assessment and Evaluation, in cooperation with the staff conducting the alternative program involved.

XI. CONTINUANCE, MODIFICATION OR DISCONTINUANCE OF ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS

Alternative education projects may be continued when shown to be meeting the goals of education of Jefferson County School District R-1 and effectively achieving the objectives and purposes of the program. Alternative education projects may be modified in accord with the privileges of this policy. Alternative programs which do not meet the educational goals of this District, which are unsuccessful in meeting the objectives and purposes of the program, or which lack significant value to the overall educational programs of Jefferson County School District R-1 shall be discontinued.

XII. STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

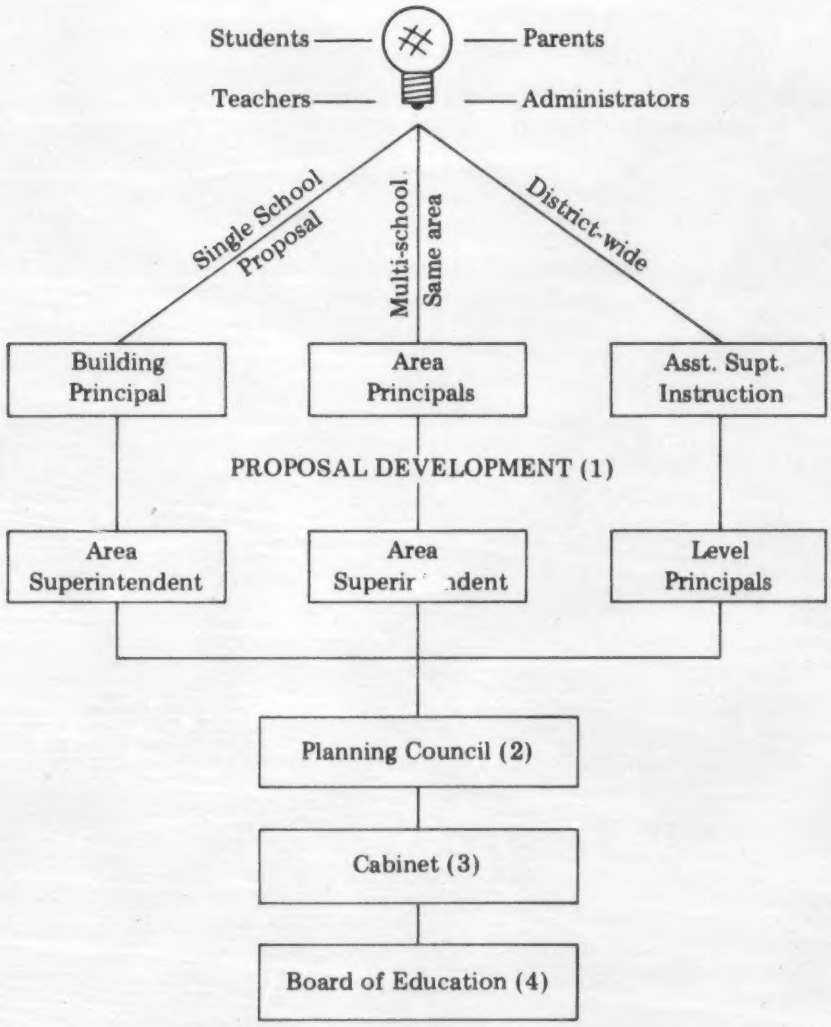
At the end of the three-year pilot status, the staff of an alternative program will develop a statement of principles which shall be submitted to the Board of Education to be considered for endorsement and adoption. The statement of principles, if adopted by the Board, shall be considered an extension of this policy as it applies to the specific educational program which, by reference, proposed it. It shall provide a specific definition of the relationship and responsibility of the program within the District, and shall include the programs or policies of the District which are waived by the Board of Education for implementation of the alternative program.

ESTABLISHING ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

I. BASIC GUIDELINES

Alternative education plans should be developed by the specific groups of students, parents, teachers and administrators who will be involved in the implementation of the program. Rather than establishing a list of prescribed alternatives the Jefferson County Public School District has prepared the following process for developing alternative programs and carrying out the approval of plans. The following flow chart provides a graphic representation of the guildelines for proposal development.

II. FLOW CHART FOR PROPOSAL APPROVAL



(1) It is recommended that advisory committees, either building, area or District-wide, be used as sounding boards during the proposal development stage.

(2) It is recommended that the Division of Instruction as represented by planning council be the decision-making group for proposals from single schools or multi-schools from the same area unless the proposal requires additional funding or a deviation from Board policy.

(3) It is recommended that cabinet be the decision-making group for District-wide proposals unless such proposals involve additional funding or deviate from Board policy.

(4) Any proposal that requires additional funding or a change in Board policy would require action by the Board of Education.

III. GUIDELINES FOR PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

Alternative education proposals shall be consistent with and will support the attainment of goals of the District. It is recognized, however, that there must be some flexibility in interpretation of the methods used to achieve the District goals. It is recommended, therefore, that each reviewing group evaluate carefully the ability of the proposed plan to achieve the goals of the Jefferson County Public Schools.

Each alternative proposal must present the following factors for consideration:

A. The objectives and purpose of the plan
   1. What are the objectives of the plan
   2. How will the plan assist students in meeting District goals

B. The student population
   1. Number of students to be served
   2. What information will be provided to students to assist them in making a decision to select the alternative
   3. What criteria will be used to select students if the number of applicants exceeds the program capacity

C. Staffing
   1. Number and qualifications of program personnel
   2. What counseling services will be available to students
   3. Are the duties and responsibilities of the unit administrator consistent with R-1 Policies and Procedures
   4. Are R-1 Policies and Procedures adhered to in staff selection

D. Operational Plan
   The proposal must provide detailed information on how the program will be operated. This plan should include proposed facility usage, schedules, outline of course of study, credit, reporting of student progress, etc.

E. Evaluation
   1. A methodology for evaluating the achievement of program objectives must be presented with the proposal. (Demonstrate use of R-1 resources in design of evaluation plan.)
   2. Identification of data to be collected for presentation to a reviewing body.

F. Budget
   The proposal should identify anticipated costs as compared to the average costs in other R-1 schools and justify any differences.

G. Community Involvement
   The proposal should include information on the degree of involvement of parents, students, teachers, and administrators in the development of the proposed operational period.

IV. OPERATIONAL PLAN

Since, by definition, these plans will operate differently than the present programs it is suggested that the proposal developers use the following guidelines in developing their operational plans.

A. Curriculum. The proposers should feel free to develop new courses of study. However, in evaluating the operational plan consideration will be given to whether or not the proposed courses will achieve the goals of the District. More specifically, each proposal will specify its own minimum achievement level in mathematics, language arts, and reading.

B. Graduation credit. All students should have the opportunity to accumulate adequate credit for

graduation. However, criteria for credit may be based on factors other than the actual number of hours spent in a classroom situation.

C. Attendance. The requirements for attendance should be defined specifically in the operational plan. It will be necessary to satisfy each reviewing group that the attendance plan will generally fulfill the requirements of the District.

D. Staff. Certificated teachers must be available in subjects in which credit is given.

V. PROCESS FOR EVALUATIVE REVIEW

The methodology for evaluation of alternative programs shall be clearly delineated prior to initial approval of the program. It is important that a review process be established which not only specifies the frequency of such review but also includes provisions for recommendations concerning continuation of the program, modification of the program, or discontinuance of the program.

In accordance with the above stated need the following guidelines will be observed:

A. Timing. Approved proposals will be reviewed annually for the first three years. Programs which are continued beyond that time span will be subject to review every third year thereafter.

B. Program Implementors. The staff responsible for implementing the program will collect both baseline and student outcome data as prescribed in the approved plan of evaluation and compare the data with the approved program objectives.

C. Audit Committee. It is recommended that an outside audit committee of persons interested in but not associated with alternative programs be appointed to review the data collected, make judgments about program effectiveness, make recommendations for continuance, modification, or discontinuance of the program and submit their recommendation to planning council. It is suggested that the composition of the audit committee should include community representation, a curriculum director, the District program audit director, and an outside evaluation specialist.

D. Planning Council. This group will review the data and recommendations from both program personnel and the audit committee and make the appropriate recommendations to the Superintendent and Board of Education.

Appendix B

This is an example of an alternative schools policy, taken from the minutes of the Minneapolis, Minnesota, school board's meetings.

BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1
REGULAR MEETING
March 13, 1973

3. **ALTERNATIVES IN EDUCATION**—Director Allen, a member of the Task Force on Alternatives, reported he had suggested the Task Force simply recommend the extension of the Southeast Alternatives concept but not necessarily each of the specific parts to the entire city; and the response was favorable. He said he is committed to an approach which provides choices to students and parents.

In any school system, said Director Allen, there is a wide range of interest from conservative to liberal which creates disagreements and tensions which are reproduced throughout the city by dividing the city into geographic districts and creating a situation wherein each school tries to be all things to all people. A more rational approach, he said, is to use the Southeast concept and divide the same population into styles by providing choices in education. An immediate gain should be the reduction of the tensions noted above and ultimately he would project greater satisfaction with the school by students, parents, and teachers and great improvement in the decision-making process. Therefore, Director Allen said he shall propose that the Board of Education adopt a resolution instructing the superintendent to start the necessary planning to implement a systemwide program of choices at the elementary level by September, 1976, said date subject to change as the Board consults with the administration on the capability to move at an earlier date or encounter obstacles which prohibit this change, including possible lack of the required financial funding. Director Allen said it is his understanding that such an action is in accord with one of the goals of the Southeast project and with one of the goals of the United States Office of Education. He said he believes that the expanded community schools are consistent with this type of program. Director Allen said his recommendation is restricted to elementary schools since his impression is that there has been greater success in these grades and there has yet to be developed satisfactory programs at the secondary level in Southeast. Furthermore, he said with such programs as outlined by the director of Vocational, Technical and Industrial Education in the development of course options in the high schools (see Board minutes of January 9, 1973, section 2), he feels the Board is undoubtedly moving now in the desired directions and action relative to secondary schools may be developed later. Director Allen further stated that as the Board prepares the final details of the 1973-74 school budget, he shall propose that there be included additional funds to be recommended by the superintendent to expand the existing planning functions in carrying out his proposed resolution.

MOTION—Director Allen moved, seconded by Director Adams, approval of the following resolution: The administration is directed to commence feasibility studies and planning necessary to implement a citywide program for educational choices at grades K through 6, with a goal of full implementation by September, 1976. Interim progress reports shall be presented to the Board on October 15, 1973 and at six-month intervals thereafter. While the concept of the Southeast Alternatives should serve as a model, the precise form of the program shall be developed during the planning period. Any plan must be consistent with desegregation / integration programs adopted by the Minneapolis Board of Education.

In response to questions from Director Preus, the superintendent stated that the administration had anticipated this type of request from the Board for a period of months. He said he is not adverse to receiving it as a charge from the Board, presuming that the report dates in six-month intervals will permit the administration to keep the Board abreast of the difficulties as well as the accomplishments which the administration may be able to make in that period of time. The superintendent said he can not guarantee that the administration will be able to meet the deadline, but he said he is as committed as are his colleagues in the faculty and the administration to the creation of choice and option in the school district—a variety of learning processes, a variety of learning styles—and accepts the assignment with a feeling of appreciation for the commitment of the Board to this

important step.

The superintendent also stated, in reply to further questions by Director Preus, that the administration's ingenuity will be tried severely in producing viable, choice and option for the citizens and students, given the stringency of funds. His guess is that the administration will find that it costs more, but it is important in the superintendent's judgment to have at least arrived at that decision through the implementation of the proposal made by Director Allen.

Director Adams clarified his understanding that the proposal by Director Allen does not permit the Board to implement but simply to study and if feasible the Board will implement. He said he presumes that the matter of financial ability to implement will be a great factor in determining whether the plan is ever implemented.

Director Borea suggested that if such a study is undertaken that meetings be held in all parts of the city so that interested citizens could participate. She stated that studies might perhaps show that in some sections of the city people were pleased with the status quo and in another school, parents might wish two choices, etc. She hoped that the individual neighborhood would be able to more or less choose the option or options for the school in that neighborhood. She also hoped that the School Board would consider producing and distributing pamphlets that would in part be based on interviews with parents of children in Southeast—examples of children who were productive to their fullest potential in each of the various options and examples of children who did not work out in one type of environment and returned to the original setting or chose yet a different option. She hoped in the final analysis each school would have what the neighborhood wanted, and she said she could support the motion if such should be the case.

The superintendent said he could not respond exactly in terms of how the administration will support the accomplishment of the proposal. He said he is positive the communities and the faculties of the schools will be involved. He said the matter might have to be approached area by area because of the magnitude of the task, but there will be involvement and communication.

Director Mason said he thinks parents and students and faculty are important elements and the rest of the community as well, whether or not they have children in the schools. He feels it important these people be involved in the decision-making process as to whether in fact the administration makes a recommendation as is contemplated. The resolution, he said, states that the goal is implementation of a choice by September, 1976. He said the Board members will have to keep their minds open on this and other subjects with the possibility that the planning will develop into a recommendation or evidence which justifies the Board abandoning the goal because it is either too costly or because it does not sound like a good educational idea. Director Mason said he favors the motion because he thinks the Board should study the proposal. He thinks it is important to give students and parents and the community choices of the sort of education they should be provided. However, he does think the Board should make clear that by doing this, the Board is not committing itself irrevocably to a particular end result.

Director Olson said he agreed wholeheartedly with Director Borea on the importance of bringing the idea into the various communities. However, he said he did not feel comfortable with the word, "planning," in the resolution. He does not mind the feasibility study because he believes that parents should certainly have a say-so in the schools, but he questions how far the planning would go. He said even if he should go for the motion, the Board members realize that he is not in favor of a wide-open, do-your-own-thing type of school system. He asked Director Allen for more detail relative to the planning stage.

Director Allen commented that he does endorse the comments made by the other Board members relative to some of the problems and certainly some of the procedures which should be used. He said he deliberately avoided being specific in the resolution because he knew that there were many things which perhaps are imponderable now and certainly the Board would expect to encounter as it goes through the process. However, in terms of planning, Director Allen said that as the Board goes through the feasibility studies, some initial steps have to be made in planning. He said a feasibility study is a form of planning in itself. He said there are check points built in with the regular reports from the administration so that the Board would not get to a point where it would continue unrestricted planning on a process which the Board of Education feels it could not support in a long term.

Chairman Davis said it is good to learn from history. He thinks there has been an historical event in Minneapolis with the Southeast Alternatives Program. He said if the Board has learned anything from it, the Board has learned that giving children options with the help and assistance of their parents, knowing their learning ability and being able to educate them acording to their learning ability, has broadened the educational potential. He said he thinks it would be helpful if the Board could offer or at least study the possibilities of offering and planning for offering options to all children in the school system. He said he is in favor of looking into the proposal with conjunction with the faculty, the parents, and the students in starting some planning to look at the proposal for the future.

Director Allen, responding to the comment by Director Olson relative to the wide-open free and easy school, commented that it seems to him that one of the advantages of a choice type of program is the fact that if there are those parents who feel their students would thrive on such a program, this option would be made available to them; but it certainly would not be required of anyone. Director Allen said he supposed he could contemplate the possibility that someone might feel there should be a type of school which is even more restrictive than the most restrictive school the Board now has. He said he does not see any conflict in his proposal with the desires of parents and students who might wish a more traditional type of education.

The motion was put to a vote and carried unanimously.

BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1
REGULAR MEETING
October 29, 1974

5. **EDUCATIONAL CHOICES**—The superintendent noted that the assistant superintendent of schools for planning and support services has been the engineer in a sense behind the efforts to direct the interest that is abroad in the community and in the schools with respect to alternative programs. He presented to Board members the third semi-annual report, "Progress Toward the Development of Educational Choices," and indicated that there would be some copies available for interested citizens following this meeting. He asked Board members to read the report, make marginal notes, and at some subsequent meeting ask questions and discuss the report. The report, the superintendent said, is the third in a series reflecting the efforts of the school district to accomplish the direction by unanimous vote of the Board of Education to ensure educational options on a full-time basis for all the students and their parents in the Minneapolis public schools at the elementary school level by September of 1976.

Director Allen noted he represents the Board on the Alternatives Task Force. At the last meeting, he reported, a visitor from Massachusetts told them that the people of Minneapolis did not know how good they had it. Director Allen said this is a happy report to receive from others because it shows that they recognize the quality of the programs in Minneapolis. At the same Task Force meeting, he said, there was a discussion of the developing and increasing concern about the problems of teacher assignment and seniority. He said this is a negotiable item and there is a policy and this will be the subject of further discussion; but he wanted to bring up the fact that members of the Task Force have expressed this concern and all feel it may become a greater problem as the concept of alternatives is expanded throughout the city.

Director Allen further stated that there has been some concern about whether the School Board is really interested in providing alternatives at the secondary level and whether the original resolution passed was limiting. He noted that it had been made clear to the Task Force that the resolution was not necessarily limiting, except in the sense there was a time line set for elementary schools and none for programs at the secondary level. To make sure that all understood and to clarify the matter, he introduced the following resolution.

MOTION—Director Allen moved, seconded by Director Lind, that the Minneapolis Public Schools is committed to the development of alternatives at the secondary level to provide choice to students and parents.

Director Mason said he was not sure the Board would be able to meet its 1976 deadline for elementary alternative schools. He noted that Director Allen had questioned whether staff and faculty training, interest, and desires will be sufficient to staff some of the alternative programs. His second concern, he said, was raised by the attitude taken by some of the parents of students enrolled at the Bryn Mawr Open school—a school of roughly 300 students—who are insisting the school remain that size or not significantly greater. He said if the Board is to find facilities and staff for all open schools to have enrollment of about 300 or not significantly greater, it seemed to him that the cost might be higher than anticipated. Therefore, Director Mason said he was not sure the Board would meet its 1976 goal for elementary students although he thinks the Board should work towards that goal; but he said, he supports Director Allen's motion.

The motion was put to a vote and carried unanimously.

The superintendent said he accepts the challenge in the spirit it is rendered. At the moment the administration is not prepared to indicate an inability to make the 1976 goal, he said, but it is nice to know that cautious persons have at least signalled the possibility of not making it. He said it may be of interest, as a supplemental bit of information, to report that there are 7,750 students this year in the elementary schools who have their choice or their parents' choice in terms of the style of education they are participating in. This number, he said, is 30 percent of the elementary enrollment.

Appendix C

A definition of "alternative education program" as part of proposed legislation for the 1977 Illinois legislative session.

This definition was prepared by Robert L. Fizzell, Hedy Ratner and William McClard.

"An alternate education program is any full service program which meets at least all of the objectives and requirements of a traditional school of the same developmental level, but which differs from the traditional program in environment, structure and/or learning styles.

"While providing a complete basic education program, many alternative schools may also have special functions and constituencies. An alternative education program may not, in and of itself, be a full service program if it serves a special curricular function within a full service program. Alternative schools may be housed within the traditional school, in separate facilities from the traditional school or in shared facilities. They must have a voluntary or open enrollment policy.

"Public alternative education programs serve to ensure that every young person may find a path to the educational goals of the community. Programs must focus on what they can offer the student, not on what problems the student has had in the past."